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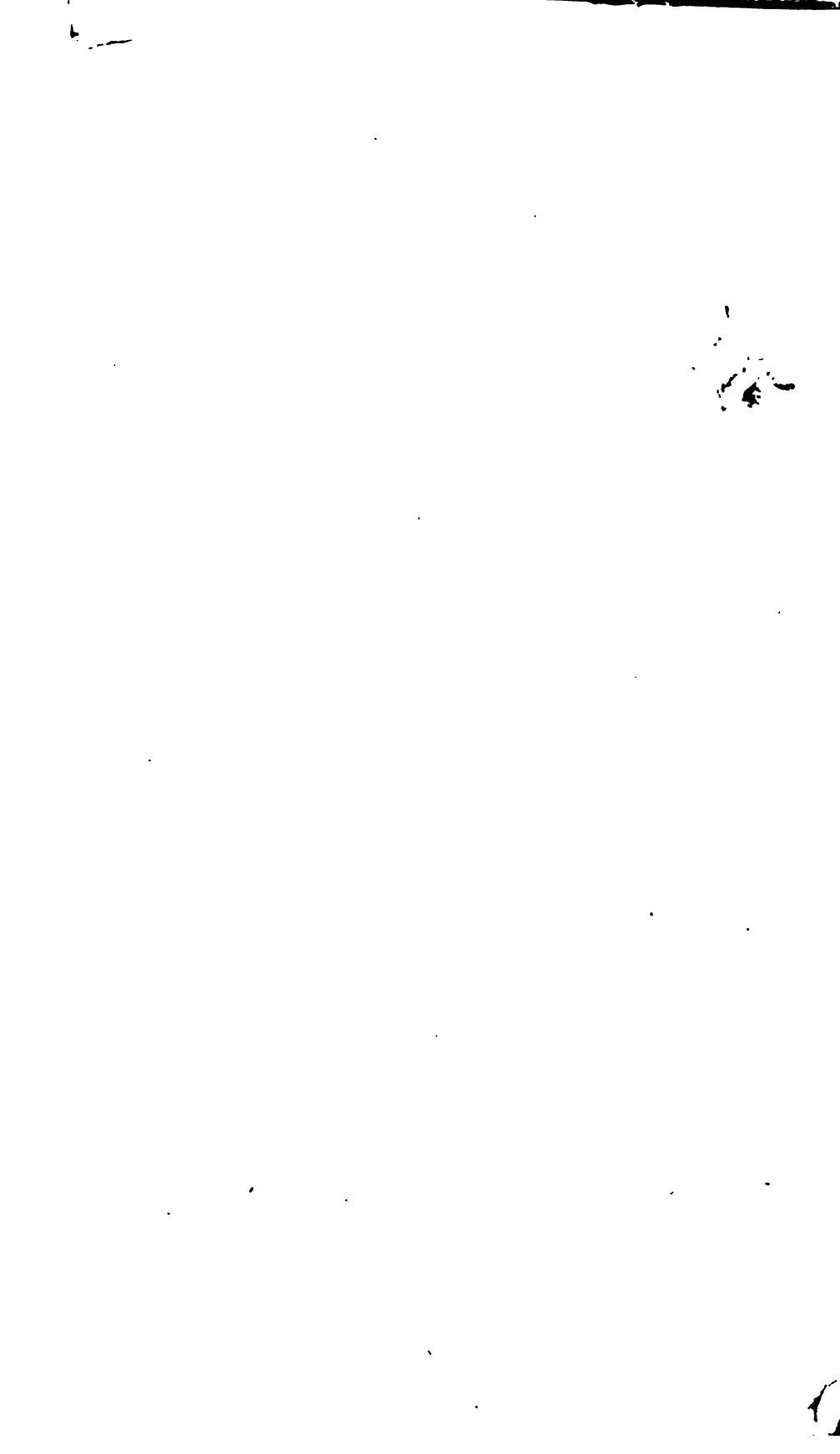














MONTAIGNE

*Portrait of Montaigne, 16th century, by H. Muller, 1850, in the collection of the Louvre Museum.*

THE *Wm Richardson*  
ESSAYS 1815  
OF  
MICHAEL DE MONTAIGNE,  
TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH,  
WITH VERY CONSIDERABLE  
AMENDMENTS AND IMPROVEMENTS  
FROM  
THE MOST ACCURATE FRENCH EDITION OF  
PETER COSTE.

The Fifth Edition,

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

LONDON:



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1811.

241/1900

THE  
**PREFACE**  
TO THE  
SEVENTH ENGLISH EDITION  
OF  
MONTAIGNE'S ESSAYS

A first English version of these Essays was published in the year 1603, by Mr. Florio,\* but they were much better translated in the reign of king Charles II. by Charles Cotton, Esq. (famous for his witty poetry on the Wonders of the Peak), and George Savil, marquis of Halifax, then lord privy-seal, and afterwards president of the council, to whom that translation was dedicated, honoured it with his special approbation, by the following letter to the translator, at his house at Berisford, in Derbyshire.

\* This gentleman, whose ancestors were the Florii of Sienna, in Tuscany, was for some time a teacher at Magdalen College, in the University of Oxford; and, after king James I. came to the crown, was appointed tutor to prince Henry, in the Italian and French tongues; and compiled a Dictionary, Italian and English, which was first printed at London, in 1597. Having lived to a good old age, he died at Fulham, of the plague, in 1625.



PREFACE:

" Sir,

" I have too long delayed my thanks to you for giving me  
" such an obliging evidence of your remembrance: That alone  
" would have been a welcome present; but when joined with the  
" book in the world I am best entertained with, it raiseth a strong  
" desire in me to be better known, where I am sure to be so  
" much pleased. I have, until now, thought wit could not be  
" translated; and do still retain so much of that opinion, that I  
" believe it impossible, except by one whose genius cometh up to  
" that of the author. You have the original strength of his  
" thought, that it almost tempts a man to believe the transmigra-  
" tion of souls; and that his, being used to hills, is come into the  
" moor-lands, to reward us here in England, for doing him more  
" right than his country will afford him. He hath by your  
" means mended his first edition. To transplant and make  
" him ours, is not only a valuable acquisition to us, but a  
" just censure of the critical impertinence of those French  
" scribblers, who have taken pains to make little cavils and ex-  
" ceptions to lessen the reputation of this great man, whom  
" nature hath made too big to confine him to the exact-  
" ness of a studied style. He let his mind have its full flight,  
" and showeth, by a generous kind of negligence, that he did  
" not write for praise, but to give the world a true picture of  
" himself, and of mankind. He scorned affected periods, or to  
" please the mistaken reader with an empty chime of words  
" He hath no affection to set himself out, and dependeth wholly  
" upon the natural force of what is his own, and the excellent  
" application of what he borroweth.

" You see, sir, I have kindness enough for Monsieur de Mon-  
" taigne to be your rival; but nobody can now pretend to be in  
" equal competition with you: I do willingly yield it is no small  
" matter for a man, to do to a more prosperous lover; and if  
" you will repay this piece of justice with another, pray believe,  
" that he who can translate such an author without doing him  
" wrong, must not only make me glad, but proud of being his

" Very humble Servant,

" HALLIFAX."

## PREFACE.

To the commendation of Montaigne, and his ingenious translator, by so great a man, it will be needless to add more; but it may be presumed the reader will here expect to be satisfied, wherein this is so much preferable to any of the former editions in English.

Mr. Cotton indeed succeeded to a miracle in his translation of so celebrated a piece: and we are thoroughly persuaded that very few Frenchmen, except perhaps some natives of Guienne, were they to undertake the task, would find themselves capable of turning Montaigne's Essays into modern French, with the same spirit, and the same justice to the author; but yet our translator was far from infallible. He had certainly one of the most difficult books in the world to struggle with, as he complained himself in his Preface, when he says, "The language of his original was in many places so ungrammatical and abstruse, that though he understood French as well as any man, he had sometimes been forced to grope for his meaning." It is no wonder then that his translation was often mistaken in the true sense of the author, any more than that the style of it should, after more than seventy years, appear in many places uncouth and obsolete. Indeed the latter was polished or rather modernised in some pages of our last edition; but in the present one, it is corrected and improved throughout, besides the rectifying of many mistakes, which Mr. Cotton probably would not have been guilty of, had he been assisted by those dictionaries published since his time, that are the best explainers of the

## PREFACE.

Gascon language, which was Montaigne's mother-tongue.

This new edition will, it is presumed, be received by the public, with the more favour, not only because the editor had those helps so necessary for explaining the author's true meaning, but because it is translated from that accurate French edition of these Essays in 1724, by PETER COSTE, who formerly translated many of Mr. LOCKE's excellent tracts with applause, into the French language, and was therefore encouraged in executing the said edition of MONTAIGNE's Essays, by the subscription of many of our chief nobility and gentry.

After submitting our best efforts for doing it justice, to the candour of the public, we refer them to what Mr. Coste himself has said, of the preference of his to all the other French editions.

**PREFACE**  
**OF**  
**PETER COSTE,**  
**TO HIS**  
**FRENCH EDITION**  
**OF**  
**MONTAIGNE'S ESSAYS.**

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**A**LL men of good sense have long been agreed as to the merit of MONTAIGNE'S ESSAYS. For my own part, I do not pretend to make a formal harangue in their praise, nor to enter into a discussion of the criticisms that have been passed upon them : for as to their merit, I can add nothing to what has been already said of it by others ; and am persuaded, that such as shall read the work, with any application, will be easily convinced of the weakness of most of those criticisms.

But there is one thing upon which I cannot help making some reflections, before I show the advantages of this edition above those which have been published hitherto ; and that is the noble candour Montaigne has demonstrated throughout the whole book, and from which he has not once departed.

Montaigne has been very much censured for having made himself so much the subject of his book : but this objection has been refuted a thousand times, and I have heard it very often repeated in company, where I could easily perceive, that they who made it were not very well acquainted with Montaigne's manner of painting himself in this book. He has done it with so much sincerity, that there is all the reason in the world to believe that he engaged in so difficult an undertaking, not so

## PREFACE OF

much out of vanity, as to communicate instruction. It is, however, certain, that the picture he has here drawn of himself, is in the nature of a faithful mirror, wherein all men may discover some of their own features, if they will but take the trouble to view themselves in it attentively, and with an honest design to see what they are in reality. And to good purpose will it be; for, in this world, a man must be very careful to inspect himself, or, by living at random, be incessantly exposed to the derision of other men, and be a prey to his own foibles, always in uneasiness and confusion, and always repining at evils, of which he will neither know the cause, nor the proper remedy. "If," as Montaigne says, \* very well upon this occasion, "the world complains, that I speak too much of myself, I complain that they do not so much as think of themselves." Would men but try to imitate Montaigne's freedom, and paint themselves in their genuine colours, they will soon perceive the undertaking not to be so blameable, as it is difficult to execute.

The generality of mankind are so blinded by a false complaisance to themselves, and by an unjustifiable kind of shame, that, far from being able to unmask themselves to the public, with that amiable sincerity which appears in Montaigne, they have not even the courage to pry into the secret recesses of their own hearts, in order to make a private discovery to themselves of their own foibles, levities, and the true motives of their actions. That undoubtedly is the reason why, of so many writers who have appeared in print since Montaigne, and of whom most have been but faint imitators (a tribe which has ever been the most numerous in the republic of letters), there has not appeared one who attempted to walk in his steps.

This is so remarkable, that the duke of Buckingham, marquis of Normandy, &c. famous for a nice discernment, and a judgment which was never suspected of being clouded by an idle complaisance, or ill grounded prejudices, took occasion from hence to pass a noble compliment upon Montaigne. For, after having mentioned Cicero and lord Chancellor Bacon, as two ex-

cellent geniuses, whose conduct was so inconsistent with the wise maxims which adorned their writings, he says that those two celebrated authors would have done much more service to the public, if they had given it a candid and particular account of the true causes of that contradiction. "But," he adds,\* "we must never expect so much sincerity in any writer, except the incomparable Montaigne, who is like to stand alone to all posterity. I know very well," continues the duke of Buckingham, "that Montaigne is charged with vanity, but in my opinion without reason—And supposing it true that he has not been altogether exempt from it, never did any person take so right a method to disguise it;" for as all his vanity was to publish his foibles and imperfections as freely as his good qualities, it was a vanity of a very particular species, and perhaps would deserve another name.

Montaigne speaks of his book, with the same frankness as he does of himself.

Besides the quotations with which he has enriched it, he confesses ingenuously that he has concealed the names of many celebrated authors, whose reasons and comparisons he has transplanted into his work, purposely to awe those rash censurers, who no sooner see a new book come out, but they set about criticising it; moreover, so far was he from a thought of appropriating the sentiments of another writer to himself, that he says,† "He should love any one that could by a clear judgment strip him of his borrowed feathers." For my own part, I have not taken a great deal of pains to trace those foreign thoughts, yet I have discovered a good number of them in each volume, though more by chance, or by memory, than by that sort of discernment, which Montaigne requires in those who should undertake to divest him of his plumage.

He tells us with the same frankness,‡ "That he aspires every where to rise to an equality with his thefts, and to go the same pace with them:" but he adds, "it is as much owing to

\* Vol. II. p. 266, of the Works of John Sheffield duke of Buckingham.

† Vol. II. of Montaigne's Essays, chap. I. Of Books.

‡ Vol. I. chap. xxv. Of the Education of Children.

## PREFACE OF

“ his application, as his invention.” Indeed his book abounds with passages taken from the best authors, which he has made his own, by clothing them in a dress quite new, and often more delicate and splendid than what they wear in the original. Was I to particularise all these ingenious applications of his, I should write a volume instead of a Preface. One single instance, taken from the 21st chapter of the first volume, will be sufficient to excite the curiosity of such readers, as have a taste for inquiries of this nature. Almost all the sentiments of that chapter, are inserted verbatim from Seneca; and, by the application which Montaigne makes of them, they appear to be plain observations of the common customs of life, which in short take in all human nature.

But from the very quotations with which Montaigne has enriched his book, some have taken occasion to impeach his sincerity, which to dispossess him of, would be entirely to deface his character. “ How comes it,” say they, “ that Montaigne, who “ has filled his book with such a number of quotations, complains so often and so bitterly of the weakness of his memory? From what a source has he drawn so many scraps of “ history, and all those beautiful passages of which he has “ made such singular applications? Was it not his memory that “ furnished him with the names of so many philosophers, their “ instructive maxims which he quotes at every turn, those long “ details which he gives of their sentiments, on the nicest “ questions of natural and moral philosophy, on the nature of “ the Divine Being, and of the essence and immortality of the “ soul?”

In answer to this objection, without entering into particulars, which would carry us too far, it may be observed in the first place, that for want of memory, Montaigne has sometimes fallen into very gross errors, as where he mistook Crates,\* for Socrates; † one Dionysius, for Diogenes the Cynic; Heraclides Ponticus, ‡ for Pythagoras; and where he makes Thales § say the very contrary to what he said, as he sometimes did Plutarch ||

\* Vol. iii. chap. 12.

† Vol. i. chap. 24.

‡ Vol. i. chap. 25.

§ Vol. iii. chap. 2.

|| Vol. ii. chap. 3, and 28.

his most intimate friend, whose works he always had in his hands, and from whom he was inseparable, even at the time he was inclined "to be without the company" and the remembrance "of every other book."

In the second place, it is not owing to memory, nor was it in the heat of composition, that Montaigne embellished his book with all the quotations that now appear in it: he inserted them for the most part at his leisure, and as he met with them in the books that came in his way. To be convinced of this one need only run over the first editions of the *Essays*, wherein there are but few quotations in chapters which were afterwards full charged with them. For instance, in the 3d chapter of the 2d Volume, for three pages together there is a great display of the sentiments of all the most celebrated philosophers of antiquity, concerning the nature of God; but there is not a single word of it in the first edition of the *Essays* printed at Bourdeaux in 1580, nor in that at Paris in 1588. And in the edition which I have now put out, it will appear to every reader, that Montaigne met with all those sentiments very exactly explained in Cicero, from whence it was very easy for him, without any effort of the memory, to transplant them into his book.

Here I cannot avoid taking notice of a censure which Montaigne has very frankly passed upon himself, and as to which nobody has ever once thought fit to contradict him: and that is what he says in his third volume, of his loose and incoherent way of writing, or as he calls it himself, by leaps and skips.†

This defect is not absolutely owing, as has been always believed, to the particular genius of Montaigne, which unaccountably drew him from one subject to another, so that he was not capable of giving more order and connection to his own thoughts; but to the many additions which he made here and there to his book, as often as it came to be reprinted. If we only compare the first editions of the *Essays* with those that followed, it is obvious that those frequent additions have very much perplexed and confounded such arguments as were originally very clear, and

\* Vol. iii. chap. 4.

† Vol. iii. chap. 8.



## PREFACE OF

very well connected. Montaigne's style, such as it appears in the first editions, and such as it stands in the latter editions, after having been corrupted by those additions, might be compared to a pearl necklace; with those pearls, though at first all perfectly round, and of an equal size, others should be mixed afterwards altogether as round, but much larger, which at the same time that they enhanced the price of the necklace, would deprive it of great part of its beauty. The case is the same with most of the thoughts which Montaigne has inserted, from time to time, in his book. One would be sorry to lose them, though, by the manner of engraving them in it, they disfigure it in many places. Because Montaigne himself could, without any difficulty, perceive the chain of his first thoughts, notwithstanding all his insertions that broke the connection, he imagined that a reader of any attention would discern them as well as he did. But in some parts of his work, the traces of that connection are so faint and obscure, that it cannot be perceived without consulting the most ancient editions. Of this there is a very remarkable instance in the notes of Vol. III. Book 8, and many others, of which a more particular discussion would be very disagreeable in this place, and carry me to an excessive length.

What remains for me, is briefly to demonstrate the advantages of this edition, above all those that have been published hitherto.

Of all the old editions of the *Essays*, the only authentic one is that published by Angelier at Paris\* in 1596, from a copy that was found after the Author's decease, as we are positively assured in the title-page, and "that had been revised and augmented, " one third more than the former editions." This is the very edition from which I have caused mine to be printed, without making any other use of those that have appeared since, than merely to correct the faults of the press. The latter editions, indeed, have had greater alterations of the style; but as I have made it a rule to myself, to publish Montaigne's book just as he left it to us himself, I have admitted of none of those pretended

\* With the extracts of the king's licence at Paris, Oct. 15, 1594.

corrections of language, which often tend only to enervate Montaigne's sentiment, and sometimes make him say a thing the very contrary to what he said before.\*

In the edition of 1595, which I have exactly followed, as to the text, there is neither a translation of the Greek, Latin, and Italian passages quoted by Montaigne, nor any discovery of the authorities from whence those passages were taken; two very necessary articles, however, with which Mademoiselle de Gournay chose to embellish the edition of the *Essays* that she published in 1635, and which appearing in the subsequent editions, with all the mistakes of the first, rendered this work of very little value.

1. To begin with the article of quotations, Mademoiselle de Gournay assures us very expressly in the Preface to her edition of the *Essays* in 1635, that a person unknown having thought fit to search for and name some of the authors whose very words had been repeated by Montaigne, she corrected all the errors he had committed, and augmented the list of those authors with at least half the number; so that there remained but about fifty passages, of which she could not discover the source. These are her very words which I cannot help repeating. "As to the  
 " names of the authors quoted," says she, "which appear here  
 " (viz. in the edition of 1635), or which may appear also in  
 " some other impressions, I have revised and compared with  
 " their text, all those which had been applied to it by the un-  
 " known person, retained the true, rejected the false, and aug-  
 " mented the former by one half; so that as to this, there re-  
 " main only fifty void blanks to be filled up with the names in so  
 " great a number, as near twelve hundred passages. It was,  
 " however, a very knotty difficulty to find the source of so many  
 " of the authorities of this book, the author having sometimes  
 " jumbled two or three together, and at other times with his  
 " usual artifice trumped up some other which rendered the  
 " search the more perplexing. Be this as it will, I should still  
 " have been entangled in it, if some persons of honour and

\* For instance, Vol. i. chap. 39, in the Note upon the Use of Wine.

#### PREFACE OF

"learning had not lent me a hand." Who would not think, after what has been said, that the source of most of Montaigne's quotations, is faithfully pointed out by Mademoiselle Gournay? Yet true it is, that her unknown friend, and those persons of honour and learning, who assisted her in the discovery of the authors quoted by Montaigne, furnished her with a very imperfect list, abounding throughout with quotations that are false, or nothing to the purpose; for very often there appear the names of authors, without specifying their works; as Livy, Petrarch, &c. sometimes Cicero or Seneca, Tibullus or Propertius, are quoted all at once for one and the same passage; sometimes two passages, one of which belongs to Cicero, the other to Seneca, are ascribed to both, one while to Seneca, and another while to Cicero; a passage of Lucretius is charged to Plautus; verses out of Virgil to Lucan, and verses out of Lucan to Virgil; and sometimes the verses of some modern poet are placed to the account of Ennius, Virgil, and Ovid. Being obliged by all these mistakes to give no credit to this list, I have not pointed out the source of any passage, till after I had seen it with my own eyes in the original author; and by my own searches, and those of some learned men, whom I always found my account in consulting, I at length discovered them all, save only about ten or twelve passages of very little importance.

How trifling soever this labour might seem, I took a pleasure in it, because I judged it very necessary: for as Montaigne's book is crowded with passages out of the best authors, which he often diverted from their original sense, that he might thereby be enabled to express his own thoughts with more beauty and spirit, the artfulness and agreeableness of those applications could only be discovered by examining those very passages at the fountain-head. But who would trouble himself to go in search after two or three verses of a hemestic of Lucretius or Catullus, a few periods of Seneca or of Cicero, a passage of Sallust, or of Titus Livy, unless it was plainly pointed out to him where he might be sure to find them.

2. A faithful translation of the Greek, Latin, and Italian passages quoted by Montaigne, was altogether as necessary. Made-

moiselle de Gournay also undertook this task ; but on a close examination of her performance, I soon perceived that it would be easier for me to make an entire new translation, than to amend that of Mademoiselle Gournay, besides that the confounding of my French with that lady's, would form a very ridiculous medley. Here I must entreat our book-critics to remember, that Montaigne having put a sense quite new upon several passages, which I have rendered into French, I was therefore obliged to transplant Montaigne's ideas into my translation, without considering whether it agreed or not with the sentiments of the authors whose expressions Montaigne borrowed.

3. A very particular advantage which this edition will have beyond all the former editions, is the verification of a great number of sentiments, turns of wit, and historical facts with which Montaigne has adorned his book, without naming the authors from whence he had them. In the first place, I took notice of some that presented themselves as it were of their own accord, and afterwards I made it my business to note down as many as I could possibly discover. By degrees this examen produced a very ample kind of criticism upon Montaigne ; for by searching into the authorities which he had recourse to, I discovered many errors that he committed, either because he did not rightly understand the authors he copied, or for want of due retention of their opinions. And to the end that his exactness might be the more visible, as well as his mistakes (which in the main are not so numerous nor so gross, but there are quite as many, and almost of the same kind too, in the most celebrated writers, the Salmasiuses, Grotiuses,\* &c.), I have at the bottom of the pages, quoted the very words of the authors in passages of any importance, without translating them, when they only say what Montaigne has since said in French ; but wherever they are contradictory to what Montaigne has said, I give an exact translation, on purpose to make such contradiction apparent.

4. This edition is also augmented with a little commentary,

\* See Mr. Barbeyrac's Preface of his excellent translation of " De Jure Belli et Pacis," p. 22, 23 ; and I know not how many more of his commentaries on that work.

#### PREFACE OF PETER COSTE.

which consists in a short paraphrase on those passages of Montaigne whose sense does not occur easily to the mind, and in an explanation of all antiquated words, which are now grown obsolete. But our virtuosos will say, was it worth while to spend time on a thing of so little importance? I know that all this must be reckoned a trifle, by men who have such a clear and well grounded knowledge of books as they have. But these gentlemen ought to consider, that as they are the more respected in the world, because they are few in number, a book only calculated for them, would be of no great use to the rest of mankind.

I have left out of this edition what appears in many others, with the title of "The Life of Montaigne;" an insipid and incomplete abstract of what Montaigne has said of himself in his *Essays*, and couched in his very words, but by their being detached from the occasion which produced them, they lose all their spirit and beauty.

To supply this omission I have added, at the end of the third volume, some letters from Montaigne, of which the last is prefixed to the *Natural Theology* of Raymond Sebonde, translated into French by Montaigne: and the others are taken from a little book which is very scarce, consisting of some posthumous pieces of Stephen de la Boetia, which Montaigne put to the press, in 1571, about nine years before the first edition of his *Essays*. This book was first showed to me by the honourable Mr. Stanley, who was so very obliging as to put it into my hands, with leave to make any extract of it that might answer my purpose. The letter wherein Montaigne relates the most remarkable particulars of the sickness and death of his intimate friend Stephen de la Boetia, is sufficient to demonstrate, that, when he had a mind to take pains, he could write in a style very coherent and regular: but in the other letters there appears that free natural air which is suitable to Montaigne's common way of writing, and to his genius.

To conclude, it will not be improper, in my opinion, to take notice that Montaigne was born in 1533, that he lived in the reigns of Francis I. Henry II. Francis II. Charles IX. Henry III. and Henry IV. and that he died in 1592, on the 13th of September, aged 59 years, 6 months, and 11 days.

A  
VINDICATION  
OF  
MONTAIGNE'S ESSAYS.

---

**T**HESE Essays, or rather Miscellanies, because they are on various subjects, though they have not so much order and connection as others, yet people of all ranks extol them above all others whatsoever. In many other Miscellanies, both ancient and modern, they complain of an unnecessary heap of quotations, whereas in this they are delighted to find authorities quite pertinent to the purpose, intermixed with the author's own thoughts; which being bold and extraordinary, are very effectual to cure men of their weakness and vanity, and induce them to a lawful pursuit of virtue and felicity. But because every body is not of this opinion, we will take notice here of what is said for and against these Essays; and this is the more necessary, because one has frequent occasions to talk of this author, his book being universally read, and having been often quoted, and referred to by the writers of the Spectator, and others of the first class.

The enemies of Montaigne tell us, that his book is so far from inspiring his readers with the love of virtue, that, on the contrary, the free and licentious

## A VINDICATION OF

words in some of his discourses teach them some vices of which they were ignorant, or else are the occasion that they take a pleasure in speaking of them, if not in committing them : that his discourses upon several effects of nature are rather fit to divert men's thoughts from the true religion, than to convince them of it, and are altogether unbecoming a christian philosopher : that his propositions and assertions are, for the most part, very dangerous for several persons, who either want learning, or have too great a bias for libertinism : that, besides an indifferent knowledge of practical morals, and of history, which Montaigne had acquired in reading Seneca and Plutarch, having conversed with few other books, as he owns himself, he had hardly a tincture of other sciences and arts, even not of the theory of moral philosophy : that he was as ignorant in other parts of philosophy, as physics, metaphysics, and logic : that he understood very little of what we call humanity, or the Belles Lettres : that he was a very ill grammarian, and a bad rhetorician : and that, as he talks positively, and boldly, Scaliger used to style him " a bold ignorant." These angry gentlemen likewise pretend, that if his quotations from ancient authors, and the little stories he tells us about his own temper and inclinations were taken out of his book, the rest would amount to little or nothing.

Having thus impartially related the most material objections urged against Montaigne, we proceed now to mention what is said in his vindication. And we might here, in the first place, make use of the long

## MONTAIGNE'S ESSAYS.

preface Mademoiselle de Gournay has prefixed to the French folio edition of his *Essays*, 1635, wherein she does not only give a full answer to all objections against Montaigne, but also talks of him as of a man whose works have revived truth in his age, and which therefore she calls "the quintessence of philosophy, "the hellebore of man's folly, the setter at liberty "of the understanding, and the judicial throne of "reason." But we do not think fit to insist upon her evidence; for, notwithstanding the solid arguments her opinion is grounded upon, she may be suspected to be blindfolded with the passionate love she had for her adopted father: and besides, we have so many great men to produce in favour of Montaigne, that we may, without any prejudice to his cause, wave the evidence of that lady. These will tell you, that if he has handled any matters with an uncommon freedom, it is owing to his generous temper, which abhorred any base compliance; and, as to his love for virtue, and his religion, they appeal to his book itself, wherein this will appear evident, if the passages, alleged to prove the contrary, are examined without partiality, and not separately by themselves; but according to the connection they have with what precedes or follows.

Stephen Pasquier, that sincere writer, who deals more fairly with Montaigne than any of his opposers, for he does not conceal his faults, nor pass by what may be said to extenuate or excuse them. "Montaigne," says he, "in one of his letters, has "several chapters, whereof the body is no ways "answerable to the head; witness the following:



## A VINDICATION OF

“ The History of Spurina ; Of the Resemblance of  
“ Children to their Parents ; Of the Verses of  
“ Virgil ; Of Coaches ; Of Lame People ; Of Van-  
“ nity, and Physiognomy. In these the author in-  
“ coherently rambles from one subject to another,  
“ without any order or connection. But after all,  
“ we must take of Montaigne what is good, and not  
“ stick to the titles of his chapters, but look into  
“ his discourses ; for possibly he designed to laugh at  
“ himself, at others, and at human capacity, by thus  
“ slighting the rules and servile laws of authors.”

I shall add on this point, that though several of his discourses do contain quite different things from what is promised in the titles, as Pasquier has observed, yet it does not always happen so ; and when he has done it, methinks, it is rather through affectation than inadvertency, to show that he did not intend to make a regular work. This likewise appears by the odd, or rather fantastical medley of his discourses, wherein from one subject he makes long digressions upon several others. No doubt, but he thought that he might take the same liberty in his meditations, as is assumed in common conversations, in which, though there be but two or three interlocutors, it is observed that there is such a variety in their discourses, that if they were set down in writing, it would appear that by digressions they are run away from their first subject, and that the last part of their conversation is very little consistent with the first. This I verily believe was his true intention, that he might present the world with a free and original work ; for none of his adversaries will be

### MONTAIGNE'S ESSAYS.

able to convince the world, that this proceeded from want of judgment in a man of such parts as they are obliged to own in Montaigne.

He aimed also, sometimes, to conceal his design by his titles; as for instance, in his third book, when having spent almost a whole chapter against physicians, it is most likely that his view was to conceal his real intentions by entitling the same, "Of the Resemblance of Children to their Parents." For this gave him an opportunity to tell us, that he was afflicted with the gravel as his father was, and to discourse of the cure of several distempers, and at the same time of the uncertainty of physic, or rather of the ignorance of physicians; from whence I conclude that, in this whole chapter, and several others, there is rather a refined art, than ignorance.

It is somewhat surprising that Montaigne should be blamed for quoting ancient writers, when his quotations are made purely to confirm or illustrate what he says, seeing Plutarch and several other excellent authors have taken the same liberty; and if it be objected, that the quotations in Plutarch are taken from Greek authors, and consequently are in the same language as his, whereas Montaigne has stuffed his French book with Greek, Latin, and Italian verses; I answer, that this is trifling; for if Montaigne found nothing in his own language worthy of being cited, or else if he thought that ancient or foreign writers had better treated the matter he speaks of, pray by what law is he forbidden to make use of their authority? I own that, in some places, he has translated passages of ancient authors

into French, and so dexterously incorporated them into his work, that he has in a manner made them his own ; but where is the great crime in this, especially seeing he has a world of thoughts of his own, which are more sublime and excellent than what he has alleged from others ?

Balzac, in his XIX. Entretien, reflects upon his diction, though at the same time he excuses it. “ He “ lived,” says he, “ in the reign of the family of “ Valois, and was a Gascon by birth, and therefore “ it is impossible but his language must have some- “ thing of the vice common to his age and country. “ However, we must own that his was an eloquent “ soul, that he expressed his thoughts in nervous, “ masculine expressions, and that his style had “ some beauties above what we could have ex- “ pected from the age he lived in. I will say no “ more on this head ; and I know that it would be “ a sort of a miracle, that a person could write or “ speak French politely, in the barbarism of Quercy “ and Perigord, where his wife, relations, and “ friends, are so many enemies to the purity of the “ French tongue. The court style then was like- “ wise as corrupt as that of the country, there be- “ ing, at that time, no settled rules for our lan- “ guage : and those faults, which are more ancient “ than the laws themselves, must be deemed innocent. “ I conclude,” says he in another place, “ that I “ have a great veneration for him, and that, in my “ opinion, he is comparable to those ancients whom “ we call *Maximos ingenio, arte rudcs, &c.*” And, in another, he compares him to a wandering guide

who brings his travellers to more agreeable tracks than he promised.

What Balzac says, in relation to the court of France in the days of Montaigne, is true enough, and very much to the purpose ; but observe here the vanity and malice of that hypercritic in reflecting upon Montaigne's country ; as if it were impossible that any body born in Perigord or Quercy should write French politely. I own Balzac has written more elegantly than Montaigne, and that the French tongue is much indebted to him ; but he whose excellency consisted chiefly in the connection or disposition of words, must not, for all that, pretend to set up for a judge of the thoughts of Montaigne, as he rashly ventured upon in his XVIII. and XIX. *Entretiens*.

It is true, Montaigne has some provincial expressions, but they are few ; and it is to be observed, that several words of his, which were at first excepted against, have been since adopted by the best writers, it being the privilege of great authors, to introduce new words. The French word *enjoué* (merry) has not been always in use, though it is now in the mouths of all the learned and polite people, and Montaigne was the first author that I know of, who made use of it ; and so they are obliged to him for this word, which does not only signify a merry man, but one who carries the very effects of mirth in his face, and chiefly upon his cheek (*jouë*).

They who tell us that Scaliger used to call him a bold ignorant, do certainly a greater injury to Scaliger than to Montaigne ; for the reputation of the

## A VINDICATION OF

former, great as it is, will never so far bias mankind, as to make them believe, that the author of a book, wherein there is so much learning, should be an ignorant. Scaliger was a better judge both of men and books, and as this is not to be found in any one of his works, I think one may venture to say, that this calumny was contrived by some of Montaigne's envious enemies, who, not having capacity enough to encounter him, made use of this artifice to run down his merit with that great name.

Monsieur de Plassac, a great admirer of Montaigne, converted his chapter of the *Vanity of Words* into modern French ; but, as he owns it himself, it was no more Montaigne's whose similies and proverbial expressions have greater energy, than the nice politeness of the modern French language ; and, besides, Montaigne's discourse is every where full of sentences and solid reason, which do not always admit that smooth but empty way of writing, so much in vogue in France.

As for the rest, there is hardly any human book extant, so fit as this to teach men what they are, and lead them insensibly to a reasonable observation of the most secret springs of their actions ; and, as cardinal Perron said, it ought to be the manual of all gentlemen, especially as his uncommon way of teaching, wins people to the practice of virtue, as much as other books fright them from it, by being dogmatical and imperious.

Thus we have answered all the material objections made against Montaigne ; for I think the other trifles which are objected against him, do not deserve to be

## MONTAIGNE'S ESSAYS.

taken notice of; and I wonder that the author of the Search after Truth, should spend his time upon them, in a manner so unbecoming his character. He tells us, after Balzac and some others, that Montaigne's vanity and pride were not suitable to an author and philosopher; that it was ridiculous and needless for him to keep a page, who had hardly 6000 livres a year, and more ridiculous still to have so often mentioned it in his writings: but I may answer, that it was very common in his time for gentlemen of honourable extraction to keep a page, in order to denote their quality, though their estate could hardly afford them to keep a footman; and that the 6000 livres a year were more then, than 20000 now-a-days. It was likewise very much unbecoming the gravity of our famous Searcher after Truth, to rail at Montaigne because he kept a clerk when he was counsellor in the parliament of Bourdeaux: for Montaigne having exercised that noble employment but for a short time, in his youth, he had no occasion to mention it; and who will believe that he concealed it out of vanity: he who, in the opinion of Malebranche himself, talks of his own imperfections and vices with too great a freedom? It is likewise very ungenerous and ungentleman-like to take notice, that he did not very well succeed in his mayoralty of Bourdeaux; for the times he lived in were very troublesome, and supposing he committed some error, which they say without any proof, what is that to the merit of his book? Balzac introduces a gentleman speaking thus to an admirer of Montaigne. "You may prize your author, if you will,

#### A VINDICATION OF

“ more than our Cicero, but I cannot fancy that a  
“ man, who governed all the world, was not at least  
“ equal to a person who did not know how to govern  
“ Bourdeaux.” This may very well pass for a jest ;  
but is it a rational way of confuting an author, to  
have recourse to personal reflections, or to some in-  
cidents relating to his private person or quality ?  
This is so mean, that I cannot fancy Balzac could  
be guilty of it ; and I wholly impute it to those who  
published, after his death, some loose discourses on  
several subjects, which they have entitled his En-  
tretiens.

Notwithstanding these objections, Montaigne al-  
ways had and is like to have admirers, as long as  
sense and reason have any credit in the world. Jus-  
tus Lipsius calls him the French Thales, and Me-  
zeray the christian Seneca ; and the incomparable  
Thuanus made an eulogy on him, which being very  
short, I shall transcribe it here.

“ Michael de Montaigne, chevalier, was born at  
“ Perigord, a seat which had the name of his family.  
“ He was made counsellor in the parliament of  
“ Bourdeaux with Stephen de la Boetia, with whom  
“ he contracted so great a friendship, that that dear  
“ friend\* of his was, even after his death, the ob-  
“ ject of his respect and veneration. Montaigne  
“ was extraordinary free and sincere, as posterity  
“ will see by his ESSAYS ; for so he has entitled that  
“ immortal monument of his genius.

\* Montaigne therefore always called him his brother, as he called  
Mademoiselle de Gournay, his daughter, upon the same principle.  
Vide the note, p. 218, of this vol.

" While he was at Venice, he was elected mayor  
 " of Bourdeaux, which place was bestowed only  
 " upon persons of the first quality, and even the go-  
 " vernors of the province thought it was an honour  
 " for them. The mareschal de Matignon, who  
 " commanded the king's forces in that province  
 " during the troubles of the state, had such an  
 " esteem for him, that he communicated the most  
 " important affairs to him, and admitted him into  
 " his council. As I had a correspondence with him  
 " while I was in his country, and since at court,  
 " the conformity of our studies and inclinations  
 " united us most intimately. He died at Montaigne  
 " in the 60th year of his age."

This testimony of Thuanus is sufficient to justify  
 the memory of our author, for nobody will believe  
 that a man of that integrity, would have been so great  
 a friend with so vicious a man, as Montaigne has been  
 represented by some who envied him. I shall there-  
 fore conclude this discourse with a very remarkable  
 circumstance, mentioned by Thuanus in his own life;  
 lib. iii. which shows that Montaigne was beloved by  
 the greatest princes in his time, and honoured with  
 their confidence. " While the states of the king-  
 " dom," says he, " were sitting at Blois, Mon-  
 " taigne and I were discoursing of the division be-  
 " tween the king of Navarre, and the duke of  
 " Guise; whereupon he told me, that he knew the  
 " most secret thoughts of both those princes, as  
 " having been employed to compose their differ-  
 " ences; and that he was persuaded, that neither  
 " of them was of the religion he professed. That



A VINDICATION OF MONTAIGNE'S ESSAYS.

“ the king of Navarre would have willingly embraced the religion of his predecessors, if he had not feared that his party would abandon him ; and that the duke of Guise would have declared himself for the confession of Augsburg, which the cardinal of Lorraine his uncle had inspired him with, if he could have done it, without any prejudice to his interests.”

I thought this circumstance was not unworthy of being placed here ; but I must beg the reader's pardon for having detained him so long, and that he would attribute it to the respect I have for the memory of so excellent a man as Montaigne, who meets with a much more favourable entertainment in England, than in his native country ; but it must be observed, that an author who writes freely of every thing, is not suitable to the temper of a servile nation, that has lost all sense of liberty.

Monsieur La Bruyere, in his celebrated book of the “ Characters and Manners of the Age,” gives another reason why some people condemn Montaigne. “ Two writers,” says he (meaning La Mothe le Vayer, and Malebranche), “ have condemned Montaigne : I know that author may be justly blamed in some things, but neither of them will allow him to have any thing valuable. One of them thinks too little to taste such an author who thinks a great deal ; and the other thinks too delicately to be pleased with what is natural. This, I believe,” says he, “ is the general character of Montaigne's enemies.”

# MONTAIGNE'S PREFACE

TO

THE READER.

---

**T**HIS, Reader, is a book altogether without guile. It tells thee at the entrance of it, that I had no view in publishing it, but what was domestic and private. I have had no regard in it, either to thy service, or my own glory: my abilities are not equal to the execution of such a design. I have devoted it to the particular benefit of my kindred and friends, to the end, that when they have lost me, which they will do very soon, they may there retrace some of my qualities and humours, and consequently that their remembrance of me may be preserved more lively and entire. Had I been to court the favour of the public, I should have adorned myself with borrowed beauties: but I am desirous to appear in my plain, natural, ordinary dress, without study and artifice; for it is my own dear self that I paint. My faults will appear here to the life, together with my imperfections, and my native form, as far as a respect to the public has permitted me. And if I had dwelt in those nations which are said to live still under the sweet liberty

**MONTAIGNE'S PREFACE.**

of the primitive laws of nature, I assure thee, I should gladly have drawn my own Portrait at full length, and quite naked. Thus, Reader, I am myself the subject of my own book ; a subject too vain and frivolous to take up even thy spare time.

Adieu therefore.

Montaigne,  
June 12, 1560.

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# ESSAYS

OF

MICHAEL SEIGNEUR DE MONTAIGNE.

---

## CHAPTER I.

*That Men arrive at the same End by different Means.*

WHEN we find, that persons whom we have of-  
fended have revenge in their own hands, and that  
we absolutely lie at their mercy, the most usual way  
of appeasing their indignation, is to move them to  
pity by submission: yet bravery, constancy, and  
resolution, which are qualities the very reverse, have  
sometimes produced the same effect.

Persons of-  
fended are  
mollified  
by submis-  
sion.

Edward the Black Prince of Wales,\* (the same  
who so long governed our province of Guienne) a  
personage remarkably great both by his rank and  
fortune, having been highly incensed by the Limo-  
sins, and taken their city by storm, was not to be  
restrained from prosecuting his revenge, by the cries  
of the people, and of the women and children aban-  
doned to slaughter, and calling for mercy, till,  
penetrating farther into the town, he took notice  
of three French gentlemen,† who, with incredible

And some-  
times by a  
firm perse-  
verance.

\* Son to Edward III. king of England, and father of the unfor-  
tunate Richard II.

† Froissart says, they were John de Villemur, Hugh de la  
Roche, and Roger de Beaufort, son to the count de Beaufort, officers  
of the city; who, when they saw the trouble and plague that was

bravery, stood it out alone against his victorious army. His admiration of such transcendent valour soon blunted the edge of his fury; so that after having given quarter to these three gentlemen, he extended his clemency to all the surviving inhabitants of the city. Scanderbeg, prince of Epirus, pursuing one of his soldiers, with a resolution to kill him; the soldier, after having in vain tried, by all the humility and supplication possible, to appease him, resolved to face about, and expect him sword in hand; which behaviour gave a sudden check to his commander's fury, who, seeing him assume so gallant a resolution, admitted him to favour. An example, however, liable to another construction, by such as never heard of the prodigious strength and valour of that prince.

Enmity  
suppressed,  
or rather  
banished,  
by pity.

True con-  
jugal love.

The emperor Conrad III. having besieged Guelph\* duke of Bavaria, would not be prevailed upon, whatever mean and unmanly concessions were offered to him, to condescend to more favourable terms, than that the women, who were besieged with the duke, might go out, without violation of their honour, on foot, and with so much only as they could carry. Such was the heroism of the sex, that they carried out their husbands and children, and even the duke himself, upon their shoulders. At this sight the emperor was so charmed with their ingenuity, as well as courage, that he wept for joy, quite extinguished the bitterness of the mortal hatred he had conceived against the duke; and from that time forward he treated him and his with friendship.

Both these ways could easily bias me; for I am wonderfully compassionate, and tender-hearted: yet,

come upon themselves and their people, said, "We shall all die, "if we do not defend ourselves; but we will sell our lives dear, "as all gentlemen ought to do." And these three Frenchmen gave several instances of their valour. The prince, coming that way in his chariot, looked upon them with admiration, and relented very much at the sight of them. Froissart, vol. i. c. 289, p. 368.

\* In 1140, in Winsberg, a town of Upper Bavaria.

I fancy, I should be sooner moved by pity, than by esteem. Nevertheless, compassion is reputed a vice among the Stoics, who consent that we relieve the afflicted, but not that we should be so affected with their sufferings, as to sympathize with them. I thought these examples the more pertinent, because therein we observe, those souls assaulted and tried by these two different means, resist the one without being shocked, and yet bend under the other. It may be said, that to suffer the heart to be totally subdued by compassion, is the effect of an easy, debonnaire, effeminate disposition; whence it comes to pass, that the weak reason of women, children, and the vulgar, is the most subject to it: but for a man to despise sighs and tears, and surrender his resentment purely to a veneration for the sacred image of virtue, this must be owing to a great and inflexible spirit, which loves and honours courage that is manly and obstinate.

Pity re-  
puted a  
vice by the  
Stoics.

Yet astonishment and admiration may in less generous minds produce a like effect. Witness the people of Thebes, who having put two of their generals upon trial for their lives, because they had continued in arms beyond the prescribed terms of their commission, very hardly acquitted Pelopidas, who sunk under the heavy charge, and produced no other arguments to save himself, than prayers and supplications; whereas, on the contrary, Epaminondas\* magnifying the exploits he had performed, and reproaching the people in a haughty arrogant manner, they had not the courage so much as to proceed to a ballot, but broke up the court, the whole assembly highly commending the noble spirit of this great man.

The The-  
bans dis-  
armed by  
the reso-  
lute spirit  
of Epami-  
nondas.

Dionysius the elder having, by a tedious and very difficult siege, taken the city of Reggio, and in it the governor Phyton, that great and good man, who

The obsti-  
nate barba-  
rity of old  
Dionysius,

\* Plutarch, in his treatise, wherein he considers how far a man may praise himself, ch. 5.



the tyrant  
of Syra-  
cuse.

had so obstinately defended it, was resolved to make him a tragical example of his revenge; \* in order whereunto, he first of all told him, that he had the day before caused his son, and all his kindred, to be drowned: to which Phyton returned no other answer, but, "that they were then happier than himself by "one day." After this, causing him to be stripped, and delivered into the hands of the executioners, they not only dragged him through the streets of the city, and most ignominiously and cruelly whipped him, but also vilified him with most bitter and contumelious language. Yet still his courage did not once fail him; but, on the contrary, with a strong voice, and undaunted countenance, he put the people in mind of the glorious cause of his death; namely, that he would not deliver up his country into the hands of a tyrant; and at the same time he threatened him with speedy chastisement from the gods. Dionysius, reading in the looks of his soldiers, that, instead of being incensed at the bravadoes of this vanquished enemy, in contempt of him their general, and of his triumph, they not only seemed mollified with admiration of such uncommon virtue, but ready as it were to mutiny, and even to rescue Phyton out of his officers' hands, he put an end to his torments, by sending him afterwards privately to be thrown into the sea.

Man a va-  
riable ani-  
mal.  
Pompey's  
regard to  
the inter-  
cession of a  
man, who  
offered to  
lay down

To say the truth, MAN is a subject wonderfully vain, fickle, and unstable, of whom it is not easy to frame any certain and uniform judgment. For instance, Pompey pardoned the whole city of the Mamerlines, though he was very much enraged against it, from pure regard to the virtue and magnanimity of one citizen, Zeno, † who took the fault of the pub-

\* Diodorus of Sicily, lib. xiv. c. 29.

† Plutarch, in his "Instructions to those who manage state affairs," ch. 17, calls this citizen by the name of Sthenon. In the notable sayings of the ancient kings, princes, and generals, where Plutarch has related the same story under the article Pompey, this brave citizen is called Stennius. But in the life of Pompey, ch. 3, the same Plutarch tells us, that Pompey treated all the towns of Sicily with

lie upon himself alone, and desired no other favour than to suffer all the punishment due to it. Yet Alexander, the most courageous of mankind, who was so gracious to the vanquished, having, after many great difficulties, taken the city of Gaza, and finding Betis, who commanded there, and of whose valour, during the siege, he had seen wonderful proofs, quite alone, abandoned by all his soldiers, his armour hacked and hewed to pieces, his body covered all over with blood and wounds, still fighting with a number of Macedonians, who attacked him on all sides; he said to him, being nettled at a victory so dear bought, (for, besides other damage, he had received two fresh wounds)\* "Thou shalt not die, "Betis, the death thou choosest, but shalt assuredly "suffer all the kinds of torments that can be inflicted "on a captive." Betis returning no answer to these menaces, but only a fierce disdainful frown, "What! "(said Alexander, observing his surly silence) is he "too stiff to bend a knee? Is he too proud to utter "one supplication? I will most certainly conquer this "silence; and if I cannot force a word from his lips, "I will at least extort a groan from his heart." His anger then swelling into rage, he commanded his heels to be bored through, and caused him to be dragged, mangled, and dismembered alive, at the tail of a cart. Was the height of courage so natural and familiar to this conqueror, that, rather than admire it, he the less esteemed it? Or, did he conceive it to be a virtue so peculiar to himself, that his pride could not, without envy, endure to see it in another? Or, was the natural impetuosity of his wrath incapable of any check? Certainly, had it been possible for any thing to curb it, it is to be believed, it must have been at the sacking and desolation of Thebes, his life for his fellow citizens. Alexander the Great's cruelty to a valiant enemy.

humanity, except that of the Mamertines; and that, having likewise resolved to chastise that of the Himerians, his fury was disarmed by the generosity of Sthenis, one of the governors of the town, who took the whole blame of the public upon himself.

\* Q. Curtius, lib. iv. c. 6.

to see so many valiant men ruined, and, totally defenceless, cruelly butchered by the sword; for there were full 6000 killed, of whom\* not one turned his back, or cried out for quarter; but, on the contrary, every one ran about through the streets, striving to provoke the victors to put them to an honourable death. There was not one who did not, to his last gasp, still endeavour to revenge himself, and, with the weapons of despair, to seek comfort in his own death, by the death of some enemy. Yet did their afflicted virtue create no pity, nor was one day long enough to glut the conqueror's vengeance; for the slaughter continued till not a drop of blood remained to be shed, except that of helpless persons, old men, women, and children, of whom 30,000 were carried into slavery.

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## CHAPTER II.

### *Of Sorrow.*

A contemptible passion.

Its effects,

NO man living is more free from this passion than I am, who neither like it in myself, nor admire it in others; yet the world is pleased to honour it as it were in the lump with a particular favour, and to make it the ornament of wisdom, virtue, and conscience. A silly mean dress! The Italians have more properly given the name to surliness which is meant by their word *tristezza*; it being a quality always malignant, always foolish; and, as it is always cowardly and mean, the Stoics would not allow their wise men to be sensible of it. Nevertheless we read in history,† that Psammenitus, king of Egypt, being defeated and taken prisoner by Cambyzes, king of

\* Diodorus of Sicily, lib. xvii. ch. 4.

† Herodotus, lib. iii. p. 187, 188. Ed. Steph. anno 1592.

Persia, seeing his daughter pass by him in the habit of a servant sent to draw water, though his friends about him burst into tears and lamentations, yet he himself remained unmoved, without uttering a word, and with his eyes fixed on the ground: and that seeing, likewise, his son immediately after led to execution, he still maintained the same composure of countenance, till spying one of his domestics dragged away amongst the captives, he smote his forehead, and mourned sadly. Similar to this, is the story of a late prince of our own nation, who being at Trent, and having news brought him of the death of his elder brother, but a brother on whom depended the whole support and honour of his house; and hearing soon after of the death of a younger brother, thesecond hope of his family, he withstood both these strokes with an exemplary magnanimity; but one of his servants happening, a few days after, to die, he suffered his constancy to be overcome by this last event, and losing his courage, so abandoned himself to sorrow and mourning, that some from thence concluded he was only pierced to the quick by this last shock; but the truth is, that being before brimful of grief, the least addition overflowed the bounds of his patience. The same might also be judged of the former example, did not history proceed to tell us, that Cambyzes asking Psammenitus,\* “Why he was “so unconcerned at the misfortune of his son and “daughter, and so impatient at the death of his “friend? It is (answered he) because this last affliction was only to be discovered by tears, the two first “exceeding all manner of expression.”

Something like this might, perhaps, be working in the fancy of the painter of old, who being, in the sacrifice of Iphigenia,† to represent the sorrow of the by-standers proportionably to the degrees in which they were variously affected by the death of this

Extreme  
sorrow is  
unutter-  
able.

\* Herod. lib. iii. pl. 188.

† Val. Max. lib. viii. c. 11. in externis, § 6.

innocent fair, and having in the other figures exerted the utmost power of his art, he drew that of the virgin's father with a veil over his face, meaning thereby, that no kind of countenance was capable of expressing such a degree of sorrow as his was. This is the reason why the poets feign the unfortunate mother, Niobe, after having first lost six sons, and successively as many daughters, to be quite stupified with grief, and at last petrified;

—————*Diriguissè malis;\**

—————whom grief alone,

Had power to stiffen into stone:

thereby to express that melancholic, dumb, and deaf stupidity which benumbs all our faculties, when oppressed with accidents, which we are not able to support under; and, indeed, the operation of grief, if it be excessive, must so overwhelm the soul, as to deprive it of the liberty of its functions; as happens to every one of us, who, upon the first alarm of every ill news, find ourselves surprised, stupified, and in a manner deprived of all power of motion; so that the soul, by giving vent to sighs and tears, seems to disentangle itself, and obtain more room and freedom,

*Et via vix tandem voci laxata dolore est.†*

And when, by struggling, grief is almost spent,

'Tis eas'd at length, by giving words some vent.

Grief the  
cause of  
sudden  
death.

In the war which king Ferdinand made upon the dowager of king John of Hungary, a man in armour was particularly taken notice of by every one for his extraordinary gallantry in a certain encounter near Buda, and, being unknown, was highly commended, and as much lamented when left dead upon the spot, but by none so much as by Raisciac, a German nobleman, who was charmed with such unparalleled valour. The body being brought off the field of battle, and the count, with the common curiosity,

\* Ov. Met. lib. vi. fab. 4.

† Æneid. lib. xi. ver. 151.

going to view it, the armour of the deceased was no sooner taken off, but he knew him to be his own son. This increased the compassion of all the spectators; only the count, without uttering one word, or changing his countenance, stood like a stock, with his eyes fixed on the corpse, till the vehemency of sorrow having overwhelmed his vital spirits, he sunk stone dead to the ground.

The lovers, who would represent an unsupportable passion, say, .

*Chi puo dir com' egli arde, e in picciol fuoco!\**

The man who can his ardent love declare,  
Has of that passion but a scanty share.

— *Misero quod omnes*

*Eripit sensus mihi: nam simul te,*

*Lesbia, asperi, nihil est super mi*

*Quod loquar amens;*

*Lingua sed torpet, tenues sub artus*

*Flamma dimanat; sonitu suopte*

*Tinniant aures, gemina teguntur*

*Lumina nocte.†*

Thou, Lesbia, robb'd my soul of rest,  
And rais'd those tumults in my breast:  
For while I gaz'd in transports tost,  
My breath was gone, my voice was lost.  
My bosom glow'd; the subtle flame  
Ran quick thro' all my vital frame:  
O'er my dim eyes a darkness hung,  
My ears with hollow murmurs rung.

It appears from hence, that in the height and greatest fury of the fit, we are not in a condition to pour out our complaints, or to use persuasion, the soul being at that time oppressed with profound thought, and the body dejected and languishing with desire; and thence it is that sometimes proceed those accidental impotencies which so unseasonably surprise the passionate lover, and that frigidity which, by the force of an immoderate ardour, seizes

\* Petrarch, fol. 70. di Gab. Giolito at Venice, 1745.

† Cat. Epig. 49.

him, even in the very lap of fruition : for all passions that suffer themselves to be relished and digested, are but moderate.

*Curæ leves loquuntur, ingentes stupent.\**

Light griefs are plaintive, but the great are dumb.

Other effects of grief.

Sudden and unexpected joy likewise produces the same effect.

*Ut me conspexit venientem, et Troia circum  
Arma amens vidit, magnis exterrita monstis,  
Dirigit visu in medio, calor ossa relinquit,  
Labitur, et longo vix tandem tempore fatur.†*

Soon as she saw me coming, and beheld  
The Trojan ensigns waving in the field,  
She was astonish'd at th' unlook'd for sight,  
And, like a statue, lost all feeling quite.  
Life's gentle heat did her stiff limbs forsake,  
She swoon'd; at length with fault'ring tongue she spake.

Besides the examples of the Roman lady‡ who died for joy to see her son safe returned from the battle of Cannæ, and of Sophocles, and Dionysius the tyrant,§ who also both died of joy, and of Talva,|| who died in Corsica at reading the news of the honours which the Roman senate had decreed for

\* Seneca Hippol. Act. ii. Scene 3.

† Virg. Æneid. lib. iii. ver. 306. &c.

‡ Pliny, Nat. Hist. lib. vii. v. 54. Titus Livy relates an accident, much like this, which happened after the battle of Thrasimene, lib. xxii. cap. 7.

§ Pliny asserts positively, that the joy of having won the prize in tragedy put an end to the days of Sophocles and old Dionysius the tyrant of Sicily; see his Nat. Hist. lib. vii. cap. 53. But, as to Dionysius, if we may believe Diodorus Siculus, the joy that possessed him, on his winning the prize in tragedy, ran him into such extravagancies as were the true cause of his death. 'He was so overjoyed at the news,' says the historian, 'that he made a great sacrifice upon it to the Gods; prepared sumptuous feasts, to which he invited all his friends, and therein drank so excessively, that it threw him into a very bad distemper.' Lib. xv. cap. 20, of Amyot's translation.

|| In Valer. Maximus, lib. ix. in Romanis, § 3, where he is called M. Juventius Thalma; Pliny, who only says, that he died in making his sacrifice, calls him, M. Juventius Talva, lib. vii. cap. 53.

him, we have one in our time, viz. Pope Leo X. who, upon the news of the taking of Milan, a thing he had set his heart upon, was so overjoyed, that he immediately fell into a fever, and died.\* As a more remarkable testimony of the weakness of human nature, it is recorded, that Diodorus the logician died upon the spot,† from excessive shame, not being able, in his own school, and in the presence of a great auditory, to resolve a quibbling question, which was pronounced to him by Stilpo. For my own part, I am very little subject to these violent passions. I am naturally slow of apprehension, which, by conversation, grows thicker and duller every day.

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### CHAPTER III.

*That our Affections are extended beyond our Existence.*

**THEY**, who accuse mankind of the folly of gaping Mankind too curious after futurity. always after futurity, and advise us to lay hold of the good which is present, as having too short reach to seize that which is to come, a thing even more impossible for us than to recover what is past, have hit upon the most universal of human errors, if that may be called an error, whereto nature itself has disposed us, which, for the better continuation of her own work, has, among several others, impressed us with this deluding imagination, as being more jealous of what we do, than what we know. For we are never present with, but always beyond ourselves. Fear, desire, and hope violently push us on towards what is to come, and deprive us of the sense and

\* Francis Guicciardin's History of Italy, lib. xiv. p. 394, vol. 2.

† Pliny's Nat. Hist. lib. vii. cap. 53.



consideration of that which is present, by amusing us with the thought of what will be, even when we shall be no more.

*Calamitosus est animus futuri anxius.\**

Incessant fears the anxious mind molest.

The duty  
of man.

Plato often repeats this great precept,† Do what thou hast to do; and know thyself. Of these two parts, each comprehends our whole duty in general terms, and, in like manner, each includes the other; for he that would mind his own business, will find, that his first lesson is, to know what he is, and what is proper for him: and he who rightly understands himself, will never mistake another man's work for his own, but will love and improve himself above all other things; will refuse superfluous employments, and reject all unprofitable schemes and proposals. As the fool, though he should enjoy all that he can possibly desire, would not be content; so the wise man acquiesces with the present, and is never dissatisfied. Epicurus exempts his wise men from all foresight and care of futurity.

The reasonableness of the law which orders the conduct of princes to be inquired into after their death.

Among the laws relating to the dead, I look upon that as salutary by which the actions of princes are to be examined after their decease. They are, while living, at least associates in making the laws, if not the masters of them; and, therefore, what justice could not inflict upon their persons, it is but reasonable should be executed upon their reputations, and the estates of their successors, things that we often value above life itself.‡ This is a custom of singular advantage to those countries where it is observed, and as much to be desired by all good princes, who have reason to be offended that the memories of the wicked should be treated with the same respect as their's. We owe, it is true, subjection and obe-

\* Seneca, Epist. 98.

† In Timeæus, p. 544, Edit. Loemarianæ, at Lyons, 1590.

‡ Diodorus of Sicily, lib. i. cap. 6.

dience to all kings alike, in regard to their office ; but, as to affection and esteem, these are only due to their virtue. Admitting even that we ought to be passive under unworthy princes, to conceal their vices, and commend their indifferent actions, whilst their authority stands in need of our support : yet, when all relation betwixt the prince and subject is at an end, there is no reason why we should not, for the sake of our own liberty, and of common justice, publish our real resentments. To debar good subjects the glory of having reverently and faithfully served a prince, whose imperfections they so well knew, were to deprive posterity of an useful example. And they who, out of respect to some obligation, unjustly defend the memory of a bad prince, against their own knowledge and consciences, perform a private act of gratitude at the expence of public justice. Titus Livius\* very truly says, that the language of courtiers is always sounding of vain ostentation, and not to be depended on ; every one indifferently extolling his own king's valour and greatness to the highest pitch. It is not impossible but some may condemn the courage of those two soldiers, who boldly answered Nero to his face ; the one being asked by him, † “ Why he bore him ill-will ? ” “ I was true to thee,” he said, “ whilst thou wast worthy of my love ; but when thou didst turn parricide, incendiary, a stage-player, and a coachman, I began to hate thee, and do so still.” And the other being asked, ‡ “ Why he had a design to take away his life ? ” “ Because,” said he, “ I had no other remedy against thy perpetual mischiefs.” But, considering the public and universal testimonies that were given after his death (and will be to all posterity, both of him, and all other bad princes like him) of his tyrannical and wicked practices, what man in his senses can blame them ?

\* Lib. xxxv. c. 48. † Tacit. Annal. l. xv. c. 67. ‡ Ibid. c. 68.

Vain ceremony of the Lacedæmonians at the death of their kings.

I confess, I am scandalized, that in so sacred a government as that of the Lacedæmonians, there should be so hypocritical a ceremony used at the death of their kings, when all their confederates and neighbours, and all sorts and degrees of men and women, as well as their slaves, cut and slashed their foreheads, in token of sorrow, repeating in their cries and lamentations,\* that that king (let him have been as wicked as the Devil) was the best they ever had; thereby attributing to his quality the praise that belongs to merit, and to the highest degree of it, though in the meanest member of the community.

Reflections on Solon's assertions, viz. That no man can be said to be happy before death.

Aristotle, who leaves no subject untouched, makes a query upon the saying of Solon,† That none can be said to be happy before he be dead. Whether any person, who has even lived and died according to his heart's desire, can be termed happy, if he has left an ill character behind him, or if his posterity is miserable. Whilst we have life and motion, we convey ourselves by fancy or anticipation whither, and to what we please; but when once we are out of being, we have no communication with the world, and therefore it had been better said of Solon, That no man is ever happy, because he is not so till after he is no more.

—Et inde

*Vix radicitus à vita se tollit, et ejicit,  
Sed facit esse sui quiddam super inscius ipse,  
Nec removel satis à projecto corpore sese, et  
radicat.†—*

He boasts no sense can after death remain,  
Yet makes himself a part of life again,  
As if some other HE could feel the pain.

}

The dead treated as if alive.

Bertrand de Glesquin dying before the castle of Rancon, near Puy in Auvergne, the besieged were afterward, upon surrender, obliged to deposit the keys of the place upon his corse. Bartholomew

\* Herodot. lib. vi. p. 401.

† Ibid. lib. i. p. 14.

‡ Lucret. lib. iii. ver. 890.

d'Alviano, the Venetian general, happening to die in their wars in Brescia, and his corpse being brought back to Venice through the territories of Verona, the enemy's country, most of the army were for desiring a safe conduct for it from the Veronese; but Theodore Trivulsio opposed it, rather choosing to make way for it by force of arms, at the hazard of a battle, saying, It is not meet that he, who in his life was never afraid of his enemies, should seem to fear them when he was dead. And, in truth, in a case of much the same nature, by the Greek laws, he who made suit to an enemy for the interment of a dead body, did, by that act, renounce his victory, and his right to erect a trophy; and he, to whom such suit was made, was ever reputed the conqueror. By this means, it was that Nicias lost the advantage that he had visibly gained over the Corinthians, and that Agesilaus, on the contrary, confirmed the doubtful title he had before to what he gained from the Boeotians.

These proceedings might appear very odd, had it not been a general practice in all ages, not only to extend the care of ourselves beyond this life, but, moreover, to fancy, that very often the favours of Heaven accompany us to the grave, and continue even to our relics. Of this there are so many instances among the ancients, waving those of our own time, that it is not necessary I should enlarge upon the subject. Edward, king of England, the first of that name, having, in the long wars betwixt him and Robert, king of Scotland, experienced of how great advantage his own immediate presence was to his affairs, as he had been always victorious where he was personally engaged, when he came to die, bound his son by a solemn oath, that, as soon as he was dead, he should cause his body to be boiled till the flesh parted from the bones; and, after burying the flesh, to carry the bones continually with him in his army, so often as he should be obliged to go against the Scots; as if victory had been chained by

The opinion of some, that the favours of Heaven accompany them in the grave.

destiny to his joints. So John Zisca, who, in vindication of Wickliffe's heresies; disturbed the Bohemians, left order, that they should flea him after his death, and make a drum of his skin, to carry into the field against his enemies, fancying it would contribute greatly to the continuation of the successes he had obtained over them. In like manner, some of the Indians, in day of battle with the Spaniards, carried with them the bones of one of their captains, in consideration of the victories they had formerly obtained under his conduct. And other people, of the same new world, do yet carry about with them, in their wars, the relics of valiant men who have died in battle, to excite their courage, and advance their fortune. Of these examples, the first only reserve for the tomb the reputation they gained by their achievements, but the latter attribute a certain agency to their dead limbs. The behaviour of captain Bayard was more rational and magnanimous, who, finding himself mortally wounded with a shot from a harquebuss, and being advised to retire out of the field, made answer, that he would not begin at the last gasp to turn his back to the enemy, and fought on as long as he had strength; till feeling himself too faint, and no longer able to sit his horse, he commanded his steward to set him down against the root of a tree, but in such a posture, that he might die with his face towards the enemy; which he did.

The singular modesty of Maximilian the emperor.

I must yet add another example as remarkable, with regard to the present subject, as the former. The emperor Maximilian, great grandfather to Philip, the present king of Spain, was a prince richly endowed with great qualities, and remarkably handsome, but had at the same time a humour very contrary to that of other princes, who, for the dispatch of their most important affairs, convert their close-stool into a chair of state, viz. That he never permitted any of his valets, how much a favourite soever, to attend him in his privy, but stole aside to make water; and

was as shy as a virgin to discover either to his physician, or any other person whatsoever, those parts of the body that are by custom kept secret. And I myself, who never blush at what I say, am yet naturally so modest in this point, that, unless it be at the importunity of necessity or pleasure, I very rarely let any one see those parts and actions which custom requires us to conceal. In this I also suffer more constraint than I conceive is very well becoming a man, especially of my profession. But the emperor indulged this modest humour to such a degree of superstition, as to give express orders in his last will, that they should put him on drawers as soon as he was dead ; to which, methinks, he would have done well to have added by a codicil, that whoever put them on should be hoodwinked. The charge which Cyrus left with his children,\* that neither they, nor any other, should either see or touch his body after the soul was departed from it, I attribute to some superstitious devotion ; both his historian, and himself, amongst other great qualities, having, in the whole course of their lives, demonstrated a singular attention and respect to religion.

Cyrus's reverence for religion.

I was by no means pleased with a story told me by a great man, of a relation of mine who had been very eminent both in peace and war, that, being arrived to a very old age, and excessively tormented with the stone, he spent the last hours of his life in an extraordinary solicitude about ordering the pomp and ceremony of his funeral, pressing all the men of condition who came to see him, to promise their attendance on him to his grave. He most earnestly importuned the very prince, who visited him in his last agonies, that he would order his family to join in the funeral procession, urging several reasons and examples to him, to prove that it was a respect due to a person of his condition ; and, having obtained a promise, and appointed the method and order of his

\* Xenophon's Cyropædia, lib. viii. cap. 7, towards the end.

funeral parade, he seemed to die content. So much vanity as this was, to the very last, I scarce ever knew!

Funerals  
ought to be  
neither too  
magnifi-  
cent, nor  
too mean.

Another, though a contrary curiosity (of which I do not want a domestic example), seems to be somewhat a-kin to this; that a man shall cudgel his brains, in the last moments of his life, to regulate his obsequies with so particular and unusual a parsimony, as to permit no more attendance than one single servant with a lanthorn; and yet I see this humour commended, as well as the appointment of Marcus Æmilius Lepidus,\* who forbade his heirs to bestow upon his corpse so much as the common ceremonies in use upon such occasions. Is it temperance and frugality to avoid expense and pleasure, when the use and knowledge thereof are by us imperceptible? An easy and cheap reformation this! If instruction were at all necessary, I should be of opinion, that this, as all other actions of life, should be regulated by every man's ability; and the philosopher Lycon† prudently ordered his executors to dispose of his body where they should think most fit, and as for his funeral, to order it neither superfluous, nor too mean. For my own part, I should wholly leave the ordering of this ceremony to custom, and to their discretion to whose lot it shall fall to do me that last office. *Totus hic locus est contemnendus in nobis, non negligendus in nostris.*‡ The place of our sepulture is wholly to be contemned by us, but not to be neglected by our friends; and it was a holy saying of a saint, *Curatio funeris, conditio sepulturæ, pompa exequiarum, magis sunt vivorum solatia, quam subsidia mortuorum;*§ i. e. the care of funerals, the place of

\* Before he died, he commanded his son to carry him to his sepulchre on the bare bed, without linen, purple, &c. In Epitome Liviana, lib. xlviii.

† Diogenes Laertius, in Lycon's life, lib. v. sect. 74, Edit. Wetst. Amsterdam, anno 1692.

‡ Cicero Tuscul. lib. i. cap. 45.

§ August. de Civit. Dei, lib. i. cap. 12.

sepulture, and the pomp of the obsequies, are rather consolations to the living, than any benefit to the dead. From this consideration it was, that when Criton asked Socrates, on his death bed, "How he would be buried?" The philosopher made him answer, "How ye will."\* If I was to concern myself further about this affair, I should think it more genteel to imitate those who entertain themselves, while alive, with the ceremony of their own obsequies, and are pleased with beholding their own dead countenances in marble. Happy are the men who can regale and gratify their senses by insensibility, and live even when they are dead!

I am ready to conceive an implacable hatred against all popular government (though I cannot but think it the most natural and equitable of all others), so oft as I call to mind the injustice and inhumanity of the Athenians, who, without mercy, or once vouchsafing to hear what they had to say for themselves, put to death their brave captains, newly returned triumphant from a naval victory, which they had obtained over the Lacedæmonians, near the Arginusian isles† (the sharpest and most obstinate engagement which ever the Greeks fought at sea), for no other reason but that the Greeks followed their blow, and pursued the advantages prescribed them by the law of arms, rather than stay to gather up and bury their dead. An execution that was yet rendered more odious, by the behaviour of Diomedon, who, being one of the condemned persons, and a man of eminent virtue, both political and military, advancing to speak, after having heard the sentence (till when he was not allowed a peaceable hearing), instead of pleading his own cause, or proving the manifest impiety of so cruel a sentence, only expressed a concern for the safety of his judges, be-

Cruel and childish superstitions of the Athenians, as to the burial of their dead.

\* Plato's Phædon, towards the end.

† Diodorus of Sicily, lib. xiii. cap. 31. Three islands to the S. E. of that of Lesbos.

‡ Diodorus of Sicily, lib. xiii. cap. 32.



seeching the gods to convert this sentence to their own good ; and praying, that, for neglecting to pay those vows that he and his companions had made (which he also acquainted them with) in acknowledgment for so glorious a success, they might not pull down the indignation of the gods upon them ; after which he went courageously to his execution.

How punished.

Fortune, not many years after, dealt them the same bread : for Chabrias, captain-general of their naval forces, having got the better of Pollis, admiral of Sparta, about the isle of Naxos, totally lost the fruits of his victory\* (of very great importance to their affairs), and lest he should incur the misfortune of the Athenian captains, he chose to save a few bodies of his dead friends that were floating on the sea, which gave opportunity to a great number of his living enemies to sail away in safety, who afterwards made them pay dear for this unseasonable superstition.

*Quæris quo jaceas post obitum loco ?  
Quoniam non nata jacent.†*

Dost ask where thou shalt lie when dead ?  
With those that ne'er yet being had.

This other passage restores the sense of repose to a body without a soul :

*Neque sepulcrum, quod recipiat, habeat portum corporis : ubi, remissa humana vitâ, corpus requiescat à malis.‡*

Nor with a tomb as with a haven blest,  
Where, after life, the corpse in peace may rest.

Just so nature demonstrates to us, that several dead things still retain an occult relation to life. Wine changes in cellars, according to the changes of the seasons of the vine from whence it came ; and the flesh of venison is said to alter its condition in the powdering-tub, and to vary its taste, according to the seasons of the living flesh of its kind.

\* Diodorus of Sicily. lib. xv. cap. 9.

† Seneca Tr. Chor. ii. ver. 30.

‡ Cicero Tuscul. lib. i. cap. 44.

## CHAPTER IV.

*How the Soul discharges its Passions upon false Objects, when the true are wanting.*

A GENTLEMAN of my country, who was frequently tormented with the gout, being often importuned by his physicians to abstain from salt meats, used to reply merrily, That there was a necessity for his having something to quarrel with in the extremity of his pain, and that he fancied, that sometimes railing at, and cursing the Bologna sausages, at other times the dried tongues, and the gammon, was some mitigation of it. And in truth, as we are chagrined if the arm which is advanced to strike misses the mark, and spends itself in vain; and as also, that to make a prospect pleasant, the sight should not be lost and dilated in the æther, but have some bounds to limit it at a reasonable distance;

The soul must have some objects for its attention, whether true or false.

*Ventus ut amittit vires, nisi robore densæ  
Occurrant sylvæ, spatio diffusus inani.\**

As winds exhaust their strength, unless withstood  
By some thick grove of strong opposing wood.

In like manner it appears, that the soul, being agitated and discomposed, is lost in itself, if it has not something to encounter with, and therefore always requires an object to aim at, and keep it employed. Plutarch says very well of those who are fond of lap-dogs and monkeys, that the amorous part which is in us, for want of a right object, rather than lie idle, does, in a manner, forge in the fancy one that is false and frivolous. And we see that the soul, in the exercise of its passions, rather deceives itself by creating a false and fantastical subject, even contrary to its own belief, than not to have something to work upon. After this manner brute beasts spend

\* Lucan, lib. iiii. ver. 362, 363.

their fury upon the stone or weapon that has hurt them, and are ready to tear themselves to pieces for the injury they have received from another :

*Pannonis haud aliter post ictum sævior ursa  
Cui jaculum parva Lybis amentavit halena,  
Se rotat in vulnus, telumque irata receptum  
Impetit, et secum fugientem circuit hastam.\**

So fierce the bear, made fiercer by the smart  
Of the bold Lybian's mortal-wounding dart,  
Turns round upon the wound, and the tough spear  
Contorted o'er her breast does flying bear.

Mankind's  
recourse to  
things ina-  
imate for  
amusement  
of their  
passions.

What causes of the misfortunes that befall us do we not ourselves invent? What is it that we do not blame, right or wrong, that we may have something to quarrel with? Those beautiful tresses, young lady, which you tear off by handfuls, are no way guilty; nor is it the whiteness of that bosom, which you smite with so much indignation and cruelty, that with an unlucky bullet has killed your dear brother: quarrel with something else. Livy, speaking of the Roman army in Spain, says, that for the loss of two brothers, their great captains, *Flere omnes repente, et offensare capita*; † all wept, and beat their foreheads: but this is a common practice. And the philosopher Bion said pleasantly of the king who plucked off the hair of his head for sorrow, "Does this man think that baldness is a remedy for grief?" ‡ Who has not seen gamblers bite and gnaw the cards, and swallow the dice in revenge for the loss of their money? Xerxes lashed the sea, and wrote a challenge to Mount Athos! § Cyrus set a whole army several days || at work, to revenge himself on the ri-

\* Lucan, lib. vi. ver. 220, &c.

† Livy, Dec. III. lib. v. Luc. lib. xxv. cap. 37.

‡ Cic. Tusc. Quæst. lib. iii. cap. 26.

§ Herodot. lib. vii. p. 452.

|| Ibid. lib. i. p. 86, 87, and Seneca de Ira, lib. iii. cap. 21. Herodotus says expressly, that Cyrus spent the whole summer about this fine expedition. And Paul Orosius, who is as incorrect as Montaigne, though in a contrary sense, says, that Cyrus employed all his troops on this work a whole year, *perpeti anno*, lib. ii. cap. 6.

ver Gnidus,\* for the fright it had put him in when he was passing over it; and Caligula demolished a very beautiful palace,† for the confinement his mother had there.

I remember there was a story when I was a boy, <sup>Impertinent vanity of a king.</sup> that one of our neighbouring kings, having been smitten by the hand of God, swore he would be revenged; and he ordered a proclamation, that, for ten years to come, no person in his dominions should pray to him, or so much as mention him, or even believe in him: by which we are not so much to take measure of the folly, as of the vain-glory peculiar to the nation of which this story was told. They are vices, indeed, that always go together, but such actions as these have more of temerity in them than of stupidity. Augustus Cæsar, having been tossed with a tempest at sea,‡ fell to defying the god Neptune, and, in the pomp of the Circensian games, to be revenged, deposed his statue from the place it had amongst the other deities. In this he was less excusable than in the former, and less too than he was afterwards, when, having lost a battle under Quintilius Varus in Germany, he raved like a madman, and sometimes ran his head against the wall, crying out, "O Varus, give me my legions again!" §

\* Or Gyndas, Γύνδης, as Herodotus calls it. Seneca and Tibullus, lib. iv. eam. i. ver. 141.—*rapidus*, *Cyri dementia*, *Gyndes*.

† Seneca de Ira, lib. iii. c. 22. *Cæsar villam in Herculanensi pulcherrimam, quia sua mater aliquando in illa custodita erat, diruit*; i. e. Cæsar demolished the most beautiful city in the Herculaneum, because his mother was once imprisoned in it. I question whether Montaigne rightly understood Seneca's meaning; or, I imagine, that instead of *plaisir*, he would have used the word *déplaisir*, because it agrees perfectly well with what Seneca says, "of her having been confined there as in a prison." In one of the first editions of the Essays in French, *plaisir* was, by inadvertency, printed instead of *déplaisir*, which mistake was from thence continued in all the succeeding editions; at least, it is the same in all that I have been able to consult; and from thence Mr. Cotton used the word pleasure.

‡ Suetonius, in the life of Augustus, sect. 16.

§ Suetonius, lib. sect. 22.

For theirs exceeded all folly, because it was attended with impiety, by carping at God himself, or at least at fortune, as if she had ears to be dinned with our complaints; like the Thracians,\* who, when it thunders or lightens, fall to shooting against Heaven with Titanian vengeance, as if by flights of arrows they thought to reduce the Deity to reason. Now as the ancient poet in Plutarch tells us, in his treatise of contentment, or the peace of the mind, chap. 4. of Amyot's translation,

*Point ne se faut courroucer aux affaires:  
Il ne leur chaut de toutes nos choleres.*

We must not rave at Heaven in our affairs,  
Which for our indignation nothing cares.

But we can never enough condemn our unruly passions.

## CHAPTER V.

*Whether the Governor of a Place besieged ought himself to go out to parley.*

**LUCIUS** Marcius,† the Roman Legate, in the war against Perseus, king of Macedon, in order to gain time for putting his army into a good condition, set on foot some overtures of accommodation, with which the king, being lulled asleep, concluded a cessation for a certain number of days, thereby giving his enemy opportunity and leisure to strengthen their army, which proved his own final ruin; yet the elder sort of senators, mindful of their forefathers' customs, condemned this proceeding, as injurious to their ancient practice, which, they said, was to fight by mere valour, and not by stratagem, surprises, and night-encounters, neither by pretended fights, nor unexpected rallies; never making war till having first proclaimed it, and very often ap-

The practice of stratagems against an enemy censured.

\* Herodot. lib. iv. cap. 289.

† Titus Livy calls him Quintus Marcius, lib. xiii. cap. 37, &c.

pointing both the hour and place of battle. Out of this honest principle it was, that they sent back to Pyrrhus his treacherous physician, and to the Hetrurians their disloyal schoolmaster. And this was indeed a conduct truly Roman, without any mixture of the Grecian subtlety, or the Punic cunning, with whom it was reputed not so honourable to overcome by force as by fraud. The latter may be of service for once, but he only reckons himself fairly overcome, who knows he is subdued neither by policy, nor chance, but by mere dint of valour, hand to hand, in a fair and generous battle.\* And it is plain, by the language of these good old senators, that this fine sentence was not yet admitted amongst them,

—*Dolus an virtus quis in hoste requirat?*†

All arts are lawful that defeat a foe.

The Achaïans, says Polybius, abhorred all manner of fraud, not reputing it a victory, unless where the courage of the enemy was fairly quelled. *Eam vir sanctus et sapiens sciet veram esse victoriam, quæ salva fide, et integra dignitate parabitur.*‡ An honest and a wise man will allow that only to be a true victory which is obtained without breach of faith, or stain of honour. Another says,

*Vosne velit, an me regnare hera, quidve ferat fors,  
Virtute experiamur.*§

In brave contention let us fight, to know  
On whom dame Fortune will the palm bestow.

In the kingdom of Ternate, the chief of the Molucca islands, amongst those people whom we so roundly call Barbarians, they have a custom never to commence war till it be first proclaimed; adding withal, an ample declaration of what means are in their power to carry it on, with what, and how many men, what ammunition, and what arms, both offen-

A people who never attack enemies, without a previous declaration of war.

\* Liv. lib. xiii. cap. 43, 47.

† Æneid, lib. ii. ver. 390.

‡ Florus, lib. i. cap. 12.

§ Ennius apud Cicero, lib. i. de Offic. cap. 12.

The Florentines proclaimed war by tolling a bell.

The most unfair stratagems publicly authorised.

sive and defensive ; but that being done, they afterwards conceive it lawful to employ, without reproach, any means that may best conduce to their success in the war. The ancient Florentines were so far from seeking any advantage over their enemies by surprise, that they always gave them a month's warning before they drew their army into the field, by the continual tolling of a bell they called *Martinella*. As for us who are not so scrupulous in this affair, and who attribute the glory of a battle to him who has the better of it, and who say with *Lysander*,\* "Where the lion's skin is too short, we must eke it out with the fox's case;" the most common occasions of surprise are derived from this practice, and we hold, that there are no moments in which the general ought to be more upon his guard, than those of parleys and treaties of accommodation. It is therefore become a general maxim in these times, that a governor of a place never ought, in a time of siege, to go out to parley. It was for this reason that, in our ancestors' days, *Messieurs de Montmard* and *d'Assigni* were so highly censured in their defence of *Mouson* against the count de *Nassau*; yet in this case it would be excusable in that governor, who, if he went out, should take care that the safety and advantage should be on his side, as count *Guide de Rongoni* did at *Reggio* (if we may believe *Bellay*, for *Gucciardine* say it was he himself) when *Mons. de l'Escut* advanced to parley, who stepped so little a way from his fort, that a disorder happening in the interim of the parley, not only *Mons. de l'Escut* and his party, who were advanced with him, found themselves by much the weaker (insomuch that *Alessandro de Trivulcio* was there slain), but he himself was compelled, as the safest way, to follow the count, and rely upon his honour, to shelter himself from the shot within the very walls of the town. *Eumenes*, being shut up in the city of *Nora*

\* See his life by *Plutarch*, chap. 4, translated by *Amyot*.

by Antigonus,\* and by him importuned to come out to hold a parley with him, as he sent him word, it was fit he should to a greater and better man than himself, and one who had now an advantage over him, he returned him this noble answer, "Tell him," said he, "that I shall never think any man better than myself, whilst I wear a sword;" and he would not consent to go out to him, till, according as he demanded, Antigonus had delivered him his own nephew Ptolomeus in hostage. And yet some have fared very well in going out to hold a parley with the besieger. Witness Henry de Vaux, a gentleman of Champagne, who being besieged in the castle of Commercy by the English, under the command of Bartholomew de Bonnes,† who had so sapped most of the out-works of the castle, that nothing remained but setting fire to the mine, to bury the besieged under the ruins, he requested the said Henry to come out to hold a parley with him for his own good; which Henry doing accordingly, with three more in company, and his evident ruin being made apparent to him, he thought himself singularly obliged to the enemy, to whom he surrendered with his garrison at discretion, and then fire being applied to the mine, the props immediately fell, and the castle was blown up, so that not one stone was left upon another. I am very ready to give credit to the faith of another person, but I should be very loth to do it in a case, where it should be supposed I did it rather from despair, and want of courage, than voluntarily, and from a confidence in the sincerity of the person with whom I had to do.

\* Plutarch's life of Eumenes, cap. 5.

† Vol. i. ch. 209. Froissart, from whom Montaigne relates this, calls him Bartholomew de Brunes.



## CHAPTER VI.

*The Time of Parleys dangerous.*

YET I lately observed that at Mussidan, in my neighbourhood, those who were drove out of it by our army, complained, with others of their party, that, during a treaty of accommodation, and in the very interim that the deputies were treating, they were surprised by treachery, and cut to pieces : a fact which, perhaps, in another age, might have been coloured over ; but, as I said before, the custom of war in these days is quite different, and there is now no confidence to be placed in an enemy, till after the last seal of obligation ; and even then there is danger enough ; so hazardous a thing it is, and ever was, to trust the observation of the faith engaged to a town which capitulates upon easy and favourable terms, to the licentiousness of a victorious army, and to give soldiers free entrance into it in the heat of blood. Lucius Æmilius Regillus, a Roman prætor, having lost time in attempting to take the city of Phocœa by force, by reason of the singular valour wherewith the inhabitants defended themselves, conditioned at last to receive them as friends to the people of Rome, and to enter the town as into a confederate city, securing them from the fear of any hostility :\* but having, for the greater pomp, brought his whole army in with him, it was not in his power, with all his endeavour, to restrain his men : so that avarice and revenge being too hard for his authority, and for the military discipline, he saw a considerable part of the city pillaged before his face. Cleomenes used to say, “ That what mischief “ soever a man could do his enemy in time of war “ was above justice, and that he was not account- “ able for it in the sight of the gods and men.” And having concluded a truce with those of Argos

The faith  
of military  
men very  
uncertain.

\* Livy, lib. xxxvii. cap. 32,

for seven days, he fell upon them the third night after, when they were all in a profound sleep, and put them to the sword, alleging for his excuse, that in the truce there was no mention of nights; but the gods punished his perfidy.

In a time of parley also, and while the citizens thought themselves very secure, the city of Cassilinum was taken by surprise, and that too in the age of the justest captains, and when the discipline of the Roman militia was in its perfection: for it is not said, that it is not lawful for us, at a proper time and place, to make an advantage of our enemies' want of understanding, as well as their want of courage. And, doubtless, war has naturally a great many privileges that are justifiable even to the prejudice of reason. And therefore here the rule fails, *Neminem id agere ut ex alterius prædetur inscitia*.\* That no one should make an advantage of another's folly. But I am astonished at the great liberty allowed in such cases by Xenophon, in his *Cyropædia*, and that both by the determinations and the several exploits of his complete emperor. He is an author, I confess, of much weight in those affairs, as being, in his own person, both a great captain, and a philosopher of the first form of the disciples of Socrates; but I cannot come into such a latitude as he dispenses with in all things and places. Monsieur d'Aubigny, having besieged Capua, and played a furious battery against it, signior Fabricio Colonna, governor of the town, having begun to hold a parley from one of the bastions, and his soldiers, in the mean time, being less on their guard, our men took it, and put all to the sword. And of later memory, at Yvoy, signior Juliano Rommino, having been such a novice as to go out to hold a parley with the constable, at his return found the place taken. But that we might not go unrevenge, the marquis de Pescara, having laid siege to Genoa, where duke Octavio Fregosa commanded

\* Cicero de Offic. lib. iii. cap. 17.

under our protection, when the articles of capitulation were so far advanced, that it was looked upon as good as concluded, several Spaniards, being slipped in, made use of this treachery, as an absolute victory. And since that time, at Ligny in the Barrois, where the count de Brienne commanded, the emperor having besieged it in person, and Bertheville, the said count's lieutenant, going out to hold a parley, whilst he was capitulating, the town was taken.

They say,

*Fu il vincer sempre mai laudabil cosa,  
Vincasi ò per fortuna, ò per ingegno.\**

That conquest ever was a glorious thing,  
Which way soe'er the conqueror purchas'd it,  
Whether it was by fortune, or by wit.

But the philosopher Chrysippus was not of this opinion, nor I heartily; for he said,† That he who runs a race, ought to exert all his strength in speed; but that it is by no means fair in him to lay hand upon his adversary, to stop him, or to set a leg before him to throw him down. And yet more generous was the answer of the great Alexander to Polypercon, when he persuaded him to take advantage of the darkness of the night to fall upon Darius: By no means, said he; I do not want to steal a victory, I had rather be sorry for my fortune, than ashamed of my victory.‡

*Atque idem fugientem haud est dignatus Orodem  
Sternere, nec jacta cæcum dare cuspide vulnus:  
Obvius adversoque occurrit, sequi viro vir  
Contulit; haud furto melior, sed fortibus armis.§*

His heart disdain'd to strike Orodes dead,  
Or in his back to stab him as he fled.  
Then with disdain the haughty victor view'd  
Orodes flying, nor the wretch pursu'd:  
Nor thought the dastard's back deserv'd a wound,  
But hast'ning to o'ertake him, gain'd the ground:  
Then, turning short, he met him face to face,  
To give his victory the better grace.

\* Ariosto, cant. xv. ver. 1, 2.

† Cicero de Offic. lib. iii. cap. 10.

‡ Quint. Curtius. lib. iv. cap. 13.

§ Æneid. lib. x. ver. 732.

## CHAPTER VII.

*That our Actions are to be judged by the Intention.*

IT is a common saying, "That death discharges us of all our obligations." Yet I know some that have taken it in another sense. Henry VII. king of England, articted with Don Philip, son to Maximilian the emperor, or to give him the more honourable appellation, father to the emperor Charles V. that the said Philip should deliver up to him his enemy, the duke of Suffolk, of the White Rose, who had taken refuge in the Netherlands, and promised that, upon such surrender of him, he would attempt nothing against the said duke's life, in which he was as good as his word, but when he came near to his latter end, he enjoined his son, by his last will and testament, to put him to death immediately after his decease. And lately, in the tragedy which the duke of Alva presented to us at Brussels, in the persons of the counts of Horne and Egmont, there were many very remarkable passages, one of which was, that the said count of Egmont (upon the security of whose word and honour the count of Horne surrendered himself to the duke of Alva) earnestly entreated that he might first mount the scaffold, to the end that his death might disengage him from his obligation to the count Horne. In this case, methinks, death did not acquit the king of his engagement, and the count of Egmont was acquitted of his, even though he had not died. We cannot be bound beyond our abilities: and because the effects and performances are not in our power, and as in truth there is nothing in our power but the will, it is on this that all the rules of man's duty are necessarily founded and establisht. Thus the count of Egmont, thinking his soul and will bound to his promise,

though he had not the power to make it good, had doubtless been absolved of his obligation, even if he had outlived the count of Horne. But the king of England, breaking his faith by previous intention, could no more excuse himself for deferring the execution of his treachery till after his death, than Herodotus's mason,\* who, having kept the treasures of the king of Egypt, his sovereign, inviolably secret in his life-time, discovered it at his death to his children.

Satisfaction after death insignificant.

I have known many persons in my time, who, being reproached by their consciences of withholding the property of another person, have aimed at making satisfaction by their last will and testament; and after their decease; but they do nothing who take so much time in so pressing an affair, or who think to repair an injury with so little compunction and expense. They owe, besides, something of what they have in their immediate possession; and the more they incommode themselves, by restoring what they have unjustly taken, the juster and the more commendable is their satisfaction; for penitence requires penance. Those do yet worse, who, by their last will, declare a mortal animosity against their neighbour, which they had concealed in their life-time, wherein they shew their little regard to their own honour, by irritating the person offended against their memory; and less to their conscience, not having the power, even in respect to death, to let their malice die with them, but extending its existence beyond their own. Unjust judges, who defer judgment to a time when they can have no knowledge of the cause! for my part, I shall take what care I can, that my death make no discovery of what my life has not first declared, and that publicly.

\* Herodotus, lib. ii. p. 151.

## CHAPTER VIII.

*Of Idleness.*

AS we see some lands that have lain fallow, if the soil is fat and fertile, produce innumerable sorts of wild herbs that are good for nothing, for want of being cultivated and sown with certain seeds proper for our service; and as we find that some women who have not known men, do of themselves bring forth shapeless lumps and pieces of flesh, and that to cause a proper and natural generation, it is necessary to impregnate them with another kind of seed: even so it is with our minds, which if not applied to some particular subject to check and restrain them, rove about confusedly in the vague expanse of imagination:

*Sicut aquæ tremulum labris uli lumen ahenis  
Sole percussim, aut radiantis imagine luncæ,  
Omnia pervolat latè loca, jamque sub auras  
Erigitur; summique ferit taquearia tecti.\**

Thus translated by Mr. DRYDEN.

So when the sun by day, or moon by night,  
Strikes on the polished brass their trembling light,  
The glitt'ring species here and there divide,  
And cast their dubious beams from side to side;  
Now on the walls, now on the pavement play,  
And to the ceiling flash the glaring day.

In which agitation, there is no folly, nor idle fancy, which they do not create:

*—velut ægri somnia, vane  
Finguntur species—†*

Like sick men's dreams, that from a troubled brain  
Phantasms create, ridiculous and vain.

The soul that has no established limit to circumscribe it, loses itself; for, as the epigrammatist says,

\* Æneid, lib. viii. ver. 22.  
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† Hor. Art. Pœt. ver. 7, 8.  
D

*Quisquis ubique habitat, maxime nusquam habitat.\**

He that is every where, is no where.

Idleness  
bewilders  
the mind.

When I lately retired to my own house, with a resolution to avoid all manner of concern in affairs as much as possible, and to spend the small remainder of my life in privacy and peace, I fancied I could not give my mind more enjoyment, than to leave it at full liberty to entertain rest, and compose itself: which I also hoped that it might do the more easily henceforwards, as being by time become more settled and improved: but I find,

———*variam semper dant otia mentem.*†

———Even in the most retired states,  
A thousand thoughts an idle life creates.

that, on the contrary, like a horse broke loose, which runs away with greater speed than the rider would put him to, it gives birth to so many chimeras, and fantastic monsters, one upon the neck of another, without order and design, that, for the sake of surveying the folly and absurdity of them when I list, I have begun to draw a catalogue of them, hoping in time to make my mind ashamed of itself.

## CHAPTER IX.

### *Of Liars.*

Montaigne's  
confession  
that he has  
not a very  
happy me-  
mory.

THERE is not a man whom it would so ill become to boast of memory as myself; for I own I have scarce any, and do not think that in the world there is another so defective as mine. My other faculties are all mean and common; but in this respect, I think myself so singular and rare, as to deserve a more than ordinary character. Besides the inconve-

\* Martial. lib. vii. ep. 72.

† Lucan. lib. iv. ver. 704.

mience I naturally suffer from this defect of memory (for in truth, the necessary use of it considered, Plato might well call it a great and powerful goddess), in my country, when they would signify that a man is void of sense, they say that he has no memory; and when I complain of the defect of mine, they reprove me, and do not think I am in earnest by accusing myself for a fool; for they do not discern the difference betwixt memory and understanding, in which they make me worse than I really am: for, on the contrary, we rather find, by experience, that a strong memory is liable to be accompanied with a weak judgment; and, as I acquit myself in nothing so well as the friend, they do me another wrong in this respect, that, by the same words with which they accuse my infirmity, they represent me as ungrateful. They bring my affection into question upon account of my memory, and turn a natural imperfection into a bad conscience. He has forgot, say they, this request, or that promise; he does not remember his friends; he has forgot to say, or to conceal such a thing for my sake. It is true, I am apt to be forgetful, but am not indifferent about any thing which a friend has given me in charge. It is enough that I suffer the misfortune, without being branded with a sort of malice, a vice so contrary to my nature.

This, however, is my comfort; first, that it is an evil from which principally I have found reason to correct a worse, that would have grown upon me, namely, ambition; for this is an intolerable defect in those who are encumbered with the management of public business. And (as several examples of the like kind; in the progress of nature demonstrate) the greater is this defect, I find my other faculties the stronger in proportion. I should have been apt to have rested my understanding and judgment on other men's, and have lazily followed their footsteps, without exerting my own strength, had any strange inventions and opinions occurred to me, by the help of

The advantages which he derives from his want of memory.



my memory. By this means too I am not so talkative; for the magazine of the memory is apt to be better stored with matter than that of the invention: and, had my memory been good, I had, ere this, deafened all my friends by my babble; for the subjects themselves, by rousing that sort of talent which I have, of handling and applying them, would have animated and spun out my discourses. It is pity; but it is no less true, that I have observed in some of my intimate friends, who, when their memories represent a thing to them entire, and as it were in present view, begin their story so far back, and crowd it with so many impertinent circumstances, that, if the story be good in itself, they spoil it; and, if it be bad, you are either to curse the strength of their memory, or the weakness of their judgment. It is a difficult matter to close up a narration, and to cut it short in its career. Neither is there any thing that more discovers the strength of a horse, than when it makes a full stop with a grace; and of those men who talk pertinently, I know some who would, but cannot, stop short; for, whilst they are seeking a period for the narration, they talk idly, and drawl out their words like men that have scarce strength to utter them. Old men especially, who yet retain the memory of things past, but forget how often they have related them, are dangerous companions; and I have known very pleasant stories told by a man of quality, that became very nauseous, by being repeated a hundred times over in the same company. The second obligation I have to this weak memory of mine is, that I less remember the injuries done to me, so that (as the ancient said) I should have a prompter, like Darius, who, that he might not forget the affront he had received from the Athenians, whenever he sat down to table, ordered one of his pages to repeat three times in his ear, "Sir, remember the Athenians:"\* moreover, the places which I revisit, and

\* Herodotus, lib. v. p. 374.

the books which I read over again, always seem new to me.

It is not without reason said, that he who has not a good memory, should never offer to tell lies. A liar I ought to have a good memory. know very well, that the grammarians distinguish betwixt an untruth and a lie, and say, that to tell an untruth is to tell a thing that is false, which we ourselves however believe to be true; and that the Latin word *mentiri*, i. e. *contra mentem ire*, means to go and act against the conscience; and that therefore this only touches those who speak contrary to what they know, who are the persons I point at. Now these do either wholly invent a story out of their own heads, or else mar and disguise one that has a real foundation. When they disguise and alter, by often telling the same story, they can scarce avoid contradicting themselves, by reason that the real fact, having first taken possession in the memory, and being there imprinted by the way of knowledge and science, it will be ever ready to present itself to the imagination, and to dislodge falsehood, which cannot have so sure and settled a footing there as certainty; and because the circumstances which they first heard, evermore running in their minds, make them forget those that are forged or foisted in. As to what they wholly invent, forasmuch as there is no contrary impression to give a shock to their forgery, there seems to be the less danger of their tripping; and yet even this also, by reason it is a mere phantom, and not to be laid hold of, is very apt to escape the memory, if it be not very perfect. I have had very pleasant experience of this, at the expense of such as profess only to accommodate their discourse to the business they have in hand, or to the humour of the great men with whom they converse; for the circumstances to which they are ready to sacrifice their honour and conscience, being subject to several changes, their language must needs vary at the same time: from whence it happens, that, of the same thing, they tell one man, it is this; and another, it

is that ; giving it different forms and colours : and if by accident those men compare notes upon informations so contrary, what becomes of this fine art? Besides, they are such fools, that they often contradict themselves ; for what a memory need they have, to retain so many different forms as they have forged upon one and the same subject ! I have known many, in my time, very ambitious of the reputation of this fine sort of wisdom ; but they do not see, that if there be a reputation in it, it can answer no end.

Lying a very hateful vice.

In plain truth, Lying is a cursed vice. We are men who have no other tie upon one another but our word. If we considered the horrid consequences of a lie, we should prosecute it with vengeance, as the worst of crimes.

Lying and stubbornness, two vices that ought early to be suppressed in children.

I perceive how absurdly children are usually corrected for innocent faults, and are made to smart for rash actions that are of no significance or consequence. The faculty of lying, and what is something of a lower form, stubbornness, seem to be faults that ought, in every instance, to be checked both in their infancy and progress, they being vices which are apt to grow up with them ; and, after the tongue has contracted a habit of lying, it is scarce to be imagined how impossible, almost, it is to draw it out of the false track ; from whence it comes to pass, that we see some, who are otherwise very honest men, not only subject, but mere slaves to this vice. I have an honest lad to my taylor, who I never heard speak truth, not even when it might have been to his advantage. If falsehood had, like truth, only one face, we should be upon better terms ; for we should then take the contrary of what the liar should say for certain truth ; but the reverse of truth has a hundred thousand forms, and is a field without limits. The Pythagoreans make good to be certain and finite, and evil, infinite and uncertain ; there are a thousand ways to miss the white, and only one to hit it. For my own part, I am not sure that I could prevail with my conscience to secure myself from mani-

fest and extreme danger by an impudent and solemn lie. One of the ancient fathers said, "That we had better be in company with a dog that we know, than with a man whose language we do not understand." *Ut externus non alieno sit hominis vice.\** So that two persons of different nations are not men with regard to each other; or, as a foreigner, to one who understands not what he says, cannot be said to supply the place of a man. And how much less sociable is false speaking than silence?

King Francis I. boasted, that he nonplussed Francisco Taverna, ambassador of Francis Sforza, duke of Milan, a man of great fame for his eloquence, by this means. The ambassador had been dispatched to excuse his master to the king for an action of great consequence, which was this; the king, in order to maintain some correspondence still in Italy, out of which he had been lately driven, and particularly in the duchy of Milan, had thought fit to have a gentleman, on his behalf, to reside constantly near the duke; an ambassador in effect, but in appearance as a private man, who pretended to reside there for his own affairs. The reason of this was, that the duke, who depended much more upon the emperor (at a time especially when he was treating of a marriage with his niece, daughter to the king of Denmark, and since dowager of Lorraine), could not be known to have any correspondence or intelligence with us, without hurting his interest considerably. For this commission a Milanese gentleman was thought proper, viz. one Merveille, who was an equerry to the king. This person, being dispatched with private credentials, and the instructions of ambassador, besides other letters of recommendation to the duke, in favour of his own private concerns, for a mask and

An ambassador caught in a lie by Francis I.

\* This is a passage out of Pliny, which Montaigne has mangled to adapt it to his sentiment. It runs in Pliny, *Ut externus alieno penè non sit hominis vice*, Nat. Hist. lib. vii. cap. 1. So that two persons of different countries are not scarce men with regard to one another.

a cloak, he staid so long at the duke's court, that the emperor took umbrage at it; which was the occasion, as we suppose, of what followed after, viz. that under pretence of a murder by him committed, his trial was dispatched in two days, and his head struck off in the dead of the night.\* The king applying to all the princes of Christendom, and even to the duke himself, to demand satisfaction, Taverna came to the court of France with a long counterfeit story, had his audience at the morning-council, where, for the support of his cause, he made a plausible harangue, concluding, that his master had never looked upon this Merveille for any other than a private gentleman, and his own subject, who came to Milan only about his own affairs, and had never lived there in any other character; absolutely denying he had ever heard that he was one of the king's household, or so much as known to his majesty, so far was he from taking him for an ambassador. The king, in his turn, urging several objections and questions to him, and sifting him every way, gruelled him at last, in the circumstance of the execution being performed in the night, as it were by stealth. To this the poor man, being confounded, made answer, in order to show his complaisance, That, out of respect to his majesty, the duke would have been very sorry that such an execution should have been performed in the day-time. Any one may imagine how he was reprimanded when he came home, for having so grossly prevaricated with a prince of so nice a discernment as king Francis.

Another  
ambassa-  
dor caught  
in a mis-  
take by  
Henry  
VIII. king  
of Eng-  
land.

Pope Julius II. having sent an ambassador to the king of England to animate him against king Francis, the ambassador, having had his audience, and the king, in his answer observing the difficulties that would attend the making such preparations as would be absolutely necessary to cope with so powerful a king, and mentioning some reasons, the ambassador

\* Bellay's Memoirs, lib. iv. fol. 153, &c. Edit. of Paris, 1573.

absurdly replied,\* That he himself had also considered them, and had indeed mentioned them to the Pope. This speech, so different from his errand, which was to push a war, gave the king of England the first glimpse of a conjecture, which was afterwards verified, that the said ambassador was in his heart a friend to France; of which the king of England having advertised the pope, his estate was confiscated, and he had like to have suffered death.

## CHAPTER X.

### *Of Readiness or Slowness in Speech.*

*Onc ne furent à tous toutes graces données.*

THUS we see, as to the gift of eloquence, some have a facility and readiness of speech, and that which is termed a quick delivery, so fluent, that they are never at a pause; and others there are, slow of speech, who never utter a sentence but what has been laboured and premeditated.

As the diversions and exercises of the ladies are so regulated, as to make the best display of their greatest beauty, so in these two different advantages of eloquence, of which the preachers and lawyers of our age seem to be the chief professors, if my opinion was to be taken, I should think the slow speaker would be more proper for the pulpit, and the other for the bar; because the preacher's function allows

The slow speaker *fit* to be a preacher.

\* Erasmus, in a book of his called *Lingua*, mentions this fact, as a thing that happened while he was in England. He says, that, being detected in conversation with the French ambassador by night, he was committed to prison, all his estate confiscated, and that, if he had fallen into the hands of Julius, he would scarce have escaped with his life. But the consequence of this *lapsus linguae* was, that the king, who, perhaps, by putting off the affair, might have composed the difference, hastened the war. *Operum Erasmi, in Folio, printed at Leyden, 1709, tom. iv. col. 684.*

The ready  
one to be  
an advo-  
cate.

him as much time as he pleases to prepare himself; and, besides, his is one continued thread of discourse, without intermission; whereas, it is the advocate's interest to enter the lists extempore, and the unexpected answers of the adverse party throw him off his bias, so that he is immediately forced to strike into a new path. Yet, at the interview betwixt pope Clement and king Francis, at Marseilles, it happened quite contrary, that M. Poyet, a man who had been bred up all his life to the bar, and was in high repute, being commissioned to make the harangue to the pope, and having so long studied it before-hand, that, it is said, he brought it quite ready with him from Paris; the pope, on the very day that it was to be spoken, lest he should intend to say something which might disgust the ambassadors of the other princes that were about him, sent the king a topic which he thought fittest both for the time and place, but such a topic as was quite different from that which Monsieur Poyet had taken so much pains about; so that the speech he had prepared remained of no use, and he was forced, that very instant, to set about another; but, finding himself incapable of forming it, the cardinal de Bellay was constrained to take that charge upon him. The pleader's province is more difficult than that of the preacher; and yet, in my opinion, we find more passable pleaders than preachers, at least in France. It seems that it is the nature of wit to operate speedily, and on a sudden; whereas the operation of judgment is deliberate and slow. But it is as strange for a man to be totally silent for want of leisure to prepare his speech, as it is for another to speak never the better though he had leisure.

Severus  
Cassius  
spoke best  
without

It is said of Severus Cassius,\* that he spoke best without having thought of the subject beforehand; that he was more indebted to his fortune than to his

\* Seneca's Epitome Controversiarum. Pref. lib. iii. p. 274. Edition at Geneva, anno 1626.

diligence ; that he spoke best when he was angered ; <sup>preparation.</sup> and that his adversaries were afraid to provoke him, lest his indignation should give a double edge to his eloquence. I know by experience, that sort of genius which is so averse to intense and painful premeditation, if it does not operate briskly and freely, performs nothing to the purpose. We say of some works, that they stink of oil, and the lamp, by reason of a certain harshness and roughness, from the labour with which they were composed. But besides this, the solicitude of performing well, and the effort of the mind too far strained, and too intent upon its undertaking, break the chain of thought, and hinder its progress, as is the case of water, which, being pressed by its force and quantity, hardly passes out of the neck of a full bottle, when just opened. In that sort of genius of which I have been speaking, there is this also observable, that it does not like to be disordered and stimulated with such strong passions as the wrath of Cassius (for such an impulse would be too rough), it likes not to be shocked, but solicited ; and had rather be warmed and roused by sudden and accidental occasions that are foreign to the point. If it be left to itself, it only flags and languishes ; agitation gives it grace and vigour. I do not like to be master of myself, and am more under the dominion of chance. Occasion, company, and even the rising and falling of my voice, extract more from my imagination, than I can find in it when I sound it and speculate by myself. Consequently, I speak better than I write, if either was to be preferred, where neither is worth any thing. This also befalls me, that I am absent from myself, and that chance brings me to myself, more than any inspection into my own judgment. I shall throw out a witticism, when I write, which I may think very fine and delicate, others dull and lifeless ; but, to speak freely, every one talks thus of himself according to his talent. For my part, I am frequently so bewildered, that I know not what I am about to say,



and a stranger finds it out before me. Were I to make a razure as oft as this befalls me, I should have nothing at all to say; but chance will at another time shew it to me, as plain as the sun at noon-day, and make me wonder how I came to hesitate.

## CHAPTER XL.

### *Of Prognostications.*

AS for oracles, it is certain that they began to lose their credit long before the birth of JESUS CHRIST; for we read that Cicero was at a loss to know the reason of it, by his saying, "How comes it to pass that the oracles at Delphos are not only now silent, but have been so for a good while, insomuch that nothing is more despised?"\* But as to the other prognostics that were derived from the anatomy of the beasts at the sacrifices, to which Plato, in some measure, ascribes the natural constitution of the intestines of these beasts; as to the clattering motion of chickens with their feet, the flying of birds: (*Aves quasdam, rerum augurandarum causâ natas esse putamus.*† i. e. We think some sort of birds be created purposely for the sake of augury.) Claps of thunder, the winding of rivers, (*Multa cernunt aruspices; multa augures provident; multa oraculis declarantur; multa vaticinationibus; multa somniis; multa portentis;*‡ i. e. Soothsayers and augurs conjecture and foresee many things, and many things are foretold in oracles, divination, dreams, and prodigies.) And as to others of the like nature, upon which the ancients grounded most of their undertakings, whether public or private, our religion has to-

\* Cic. de Divinatione, lib. ii. cap. 52.

† Cic. de Natura Deorum, lib. ii. cap. 64.

‡ Ibid. cap. 65.

tally abolished them; although there yet remain among us some methods of divination from the stars, from spirits, the forms of human bodies, from dreams, and the like; a notable instance of the wild curiosity of our nature in amusing itself to anticipate futurity, as if it had not enough to do, to digest the things present.

— *Cur hanc tibi, rector Olympi,  
Solicitis visum mortalibus addere curam,  
Noscunt venturas ut dira per omnia clades?*

*Sit subitum quodcunque paras, sit cæca futuri  
Mens hominum fati, liceat sperare timenti.\* i. e.*

Why, sov'reign ruler of Olympus, why,  
To human breasts, which heave the anxious sigh,  
Add'st thou this care, that men should be so wise  
To know, by omens, future miseries?

Unlook'd for send the ills thou hast design'd;  
Let human eyes to future fate be blind,  
'That hope, amidst our fears, some place may find.

*Ne utile quidem est scire quid futurum sit : miserum est enim, nihil proficientem angere.† i. e.* It is of no avail to know what is to come to pass; and it is a miserable thing to be tormented for nothing. Yet divination is of much less authority in our days. Wherefore, I think Francis marquis de Saluzzo a very notable instance, who, being a lieutenant-general in the army of king Francis, beyond the mountains, a prodigious favourite at our court, and obliged to the king for the said marquisate, which his brother had forfeited; and who withal had no occasion to change his party, his own affection opposing any such step, suffered himself to be so terrified (as was confidently affirmed) with the favourable prognostications that were universally spread abroad to the advantage of the emperor, Charles V. and to our disadvantage (even in Italy, where these idle pro-

\* Lucan. lib. ii. ver. 4, 5, 6, 14, 15.

† Cic. de Nat. Deor. lib. iii. cap. 6.

phacies had gained such credit, that at Rome a great sum of money was staked on the supposition of our ruin), that, having often condoled with his particular friends for the misfortunes which he saw must unavoidably fall upon the crown of France, and the friends he had there, he revolted, in 1536, and changed sides; but to his great loss, whatsoever constellation presided at time. For he behaved in this affair like a man agitated with divers passions; having both towns and forces at his command, the enemy's army under Antonio de Leva close by him, and we having no suspicion of his design, it was in his power to have almost entirely ruined us; we did not, however, lose a single man by his treachery, neither any town but Fossan, nor even that till after a long dispute.

*Prudens futuri temporis exitum  
Caliginosa nocte premit Deus:  
Ridetque si mortalis ultra  
Eas trepidat.*

—ille potens sui

*Lætusque deget, cui licet, in diem  
Dixisse, vixi: cras vel atra  
Nube Polum pater occupato,  
Vel sole puro.\*  
Lætus in præsens animus, quod ultra est  
Oderit curare.† i. e.*

The God of wisdom has in shades of night  
Future events conceal'd from human sight;  
And smiles with pity at the mortal race,  
Trembling for what may never come to pass.

He's master of himself alone,  
He lives that makes each day his own;  
His life is happy, who can say,  
When night comes, I've lived well to-day;  
And for to-morrow takes no care,  
Whether the day prove foul or fair.

The man that's cheerful in his present state,  
Is never anxious for his future fate.

\* Hor. Ode xxix. lib. iil. ver. 29.

† Ibid. Ode xvi. lib. ii. ver. 25, 26.

And they who put a contrary sense on this passage misunderstand it.\*

Much more wisely said Pacuvius,

*Nam istis qui linguam avium intelligunt,*

*—Plusque ex alieno jecore sapiunt, quam ex suo,*

*—Magis audiendum, quam auscultandum censeo. i. e.*

As for such who understand the language of birds, and know more by the liver of an animal than by their own reason, I think it is better to give them a hearing than credit.

The so much celebrated art of divination among the Tuscans, had its rise thus: a ploughman, forcing his share deep into the earth, turned up the demigod Tages,† who had the visage of a child, but the wisdom of an old man. Every body flocked to him; and his sayings, and his system, containing the principles of this art, and the means of attaining it, was compiled, and preserved for many ages. As its rise,

The strange original of the art of divination.

\* What Montaigne says here, seems at first obscure, and it is not easy to discover its connection with what goes before. But this perplexity proceeds chiefly from the bold and unusual transposition which he has made of the words *au contraire*, which ought to be placed thus, *au contraire, ceux qui croient ce mot le croient à tort*; i. e. on the contrary, they who believe this passage are in the wrong. It has been quite mistaken in Mr. Cotton's English Translation of Montaigne, however just and elegant it may be elsewhere; for, hitherto, Montaigne had been condemning the prognostics of futurity, drawn from several tokens, founded merely on human fancy; and now he declares against that principle of the stoics, quoted by Cicero de *Divinatione*, lib. iii. cap. 6. viz. "If there is such a thing as divination, there are gods; and if there are gods, there is divination." I have been more particular in my preface, to shew the reason of that incoherence for which Montaigne's style is so much blamed. It is certain that the connection of his sentiments must needs often escape the discernment of an inattentive reader; but I hope that I have demonstrated, that, however common, the connection is very real.

† Pacuvius apud Cic. de *Divinatione*, lib. i. c. 57.

‡ Cic. de *Divinatione*, lib. ii. cap. 23.

*Indigenæ dixere Tagen, qui primus Etruscum*

*Edocuit gentem casus aperire futuros. Ovid. Metam. lib. xv.*

i. e. He that first taught the Tuscans the knowledge of futurity was by the natives called Tages.

so was its progress. I should choose rather to regulate my affairs by the turn of a die, than by such dreams; and, indeed, in all republics, a good share of authority has ever been left to chance. Plato, in that system of government which he has formed out of his own head, ascribes the decision of several important things to chance; and amongst the rest, would have marriages of the better\* sort of people be appointed by lot: and to such choice by chance he gives so great a sanction, as to order the children born of such marriage to be brought up in the country, and that those of mean parentage should be turned out of it: nevertheless, that if any one, so banished, should, as it grew up, happen to give any hopes of being eminently good, it might be recalled, and those that were kept at home, who give little expectation of their youth, were as liable to be banished. I see some that pore and comment on their almanacs, producing their authority for occurrences, who after all must needs stumble upon some truth in a number of lies. *Quis est enim qui totum diem jaculans non aliquando conlinet?*† i. e. Who is there that shoots at a mark all day, will not hit it sometimes? I do not think the better of them for some accidental hits. There would be more certainty in it, if it was settled as a rule always to lie. Besides, nobody keeps a register of their misreckonings, because they are common and endless; but, if they once guess right, their divinations are cried up as rare, incredible, and prodigious. Diagoras, surnamed the Atheist, being in

\* Viz. in his Republic, lib. v. where he requires, that the chiefs of his commonwealth should so order it, that the men of the greatest excellence should be matched with the most excellent women; and on the contrary, that the most contemptible men should be married to women of their own low character; but that the thing should be decided by a sort of lottery, so artfully managed (*κλῆροι ποικίλῃ καὶ ψήφοι*) that the latter may blame Fortune for it, and not their governors. But there is not one instance of choice made by chance, and consequently Montaigne might as well have omitted to give us this quotation.

† Cic. de Divinatione, lib. ii. cap. 59.

the temple of Samothrace, where he saw the many vows and pictures of those that had escaped shipwreck, the person who shewed them, said to him, "You who think that the gods have no concern for human things, what say you of so many persons saved by their favour?" "So it was," replied Diagoras, "but here are not the pictures of those that were drowned, who were much the greater number." Cicero observes,\* that of all the philosophers who acknowledged any deities, Xenophanes of Colophon is the only one that endeavoured to eradicate all manner of divination. And it is not so much to be wondered, if we have seen some of our princes, to their own cost, influenced by these chimeras.† I wish I had with my own eyes seen those two wonderful books, viz. that of Joachim, the Calabrian abbot, which foretold all the future popes, their names and shapes; and that of the emperor Leo, which prophesied of the emperors and patriarchs of Greece. This I have been an eye-witness of, that, in public confusions, men, astonished at their fortune, have abandoned their reason almost totally to superstition, by looking up to the starry heaven for the ancient causes and prognostics of their fate, and have therein been so surprisingly successful, in my time, as to make me believe, that this study, being an amusement for men of penetration and leisure, those who are inclined to this subtilty of explaining and unridling mysteries, would be capable of finding out what they want to know in all writings whatsoever. But above all, that which gives them the greatest scope is, the obscure, ambiguous, and fantastic part of their prophetic jargon, to which their authors give no clear interpretation, to the end that posterity may make what application of it they please.

The Dæmon of Socrates was, perhaps, a certain <sup>Mons-  
taigne's  
opinion of</sup> impulse of the will, which obtruded itself on him

\* Cic. de Nat. Deorum, lib. iii. cap. 37.

† Cic. de Divin. lib. i. cap. 3.

Socrates' Demon.

without consulting his own judgment. For in a soul so refined as his was, and prepared by the constant exercise of wisdom and virtue, it is probable, that these inclinations of his, though rash and indigested, were always important, and worthy to be followed. Every one finds in himself some image of such agitations of a prompt, vehement, and fortuitous opinion. It is my duty to allow them some authority, who attribute so little to our prudence. And I myself have had some agitations, weak in reason, but violent in persuasion, or in dissuasion (which was the common case with Socrates), by which I have suffered myself to be carried away so much to my own advantage, that they might well be supposed to have something in them of divine inspiration.

## CHAPTER XII

### *Of Constancy.*

In what constancy and resolution consist.

BY resolution and constancy it is not implied that we ought not, as much as in us lies, to secure ourselves from the mischiefs and inconveniences that threaten us; nor, consequently, that we should not be afraid of being surprised by them: on the contrary, all honest means of preserving ourselves from harms are not only allowed of, but commendable. And the business of constancy chiefly is, to suffer, without flinching, those inconveniences against which there is no remedy. At the same time, there is no motion of the body, nor any guard in the handling of arms, that we disapprove of, if it serves to defend us from the stroke that is aimed at us. Several very warlike nations have, in their battles, found their chief advantage in a retreat, and done the enemy more mischief by turning their backs to them than their faces. Of which way of fighting the Turks retain something to this day. Socrates, in Plato, ral-

Laches, who had defined fortitude to be nothing more nor less than standing firm in rank to face the enemy: "What," said he, "would it be cowardice to beat them by giving ground?" At the same time, he quoted Homer, where he commends Æneas for his skill in retreating. And because Laches, upon fresh consideration, owned this was the practice of the Scythians, and in general of all cavalry, he urged another proof from the instance of the infantry of the Lacedæmonians (a nation of all others the most obstinate in maintaining their ground), who, in the battle of Platea, not being able to penetrate the Persian phalanx, thought fit to fall back; that the enemy, supposing them flying, might break and disunite their firm body in the pursuit, by which means the Lacedæmonians obtained the victory. As for the Scythians, it is said, that when Darius set out on his expedition to subdue them, he sent to reproach the king with cowardice, for always retiring before him, and declining a battle; to which Indathysis (for that was his name) made answer, "That he did so not for fear of him, or of any man living, but that it was the way of marching in his country, where there were neither tilled fields, nor town, nor house to defend, or of which the enemy could make any advantage: but that if he had such a voracious appetite, let him only come and view their ancient place of sepulture, and there he should have his bellyful."\*

Nevertheless, as to cannon which is levelled for a mark, as the occasions of war often require, it is shameful to quit a post to avoid the threatened blow, forasmuch as, by reason of the violence and velocity of the shot, we account it inevitable; and many a person, by ducking the head, or holding up the hand, has furnished matter for his comrades to laugh at. Yet, in the expedition which the emperor Charles V. made against us in Provence, the marquis de

\* Herodotus, lib. iv. p. 300, 301.



Guast going to reconnoitre the city of Arles, and venturing to advance out of the shelter of a windmill, by the favour of which he made his approach so near the town as he had done, he was spied by the seigneurs de Bonneval and the seneschal d' Agenois, as they were walking on the Theatre des Arenes,\* who having shewed him to Monsieur de Villiers, commissary of the artillery, he levelled a culverin at him so dexterously, that had not the marquis, upon seeing the match lighted, instantly popped to one side, he probably would have been shot in the body. In like manner, some years before this, Lorenzo de Medicis, duke of Urbino, father to the queen-mother of France, laying siege to Mondolpho, in those parts called the Vicariate of Italy, seeing the gunner put fire to a piece that pointed directly at him, was so fortunate as to duck down that moment, otherwise the ball, which only grazed the top of his head, would doubtless have hit him on the breast. To speak truth, I do not think that these dodgings are made with judgment; for how is any man living able to judge of high or low aim on so sudden an occasion? and it is much more natural to think, that fortune favoured their fear, and that the same motion, at another time, might as well put a person into danger, as free him from it. For my own part, I cannot forbear starting when the noise of a gun thunders in my ears on a sudden, and in a place where I have no reason to expect it, which I have also observed in other men of stouter hearts than mine. Neither do the stoics mean that the soul of their philosopher should be proof against the first surprise, by visions and fancies; and they think that it is but natural for him to be shocked by the terrible rattle of thunder, or the fall of some ruin, for instance, even so as to turn pale, or be convulsed (as well as in the other passions). This the stoics, I say, dispense with in their wise man, provided his judgment remains sound and

Philosophers not blamable for yielding to the first attacks of the passions.

\* The theatre for the public shews of riding, fencing, &c.

entire. A fright is the same thing to him who is not a philosopher, in the first moment of it, but quite another case in the second ; for, in such a one, the impression of the passions does not remain superficial only, but penetrates even to the seat of his reason, so as to infect and corrupt it. According to his passions he judges and conforms his conduct. But in this verse you may see the state of the wise stoic elegantly and plainly expressed :

*Mens immota manet, lacrymæ voluntur inanes.\**

The mind doth fix'd remain,  
While tears are shed in vain.

The peripatetic philosopher is not exempt from the perturbations of the mind, but he keeps them within bounds.

### CHAPTER XIII.

#### *Of the Ceremony at the Interview of Princes.*

THERE is no subject so frivolous, that does not merit a place in this rhapsody. According to our common rules of civility, it would be unpolite behaviour to an equal, and much more to a superior, to fail of being at home, when he has given you notice that he will come to pay you a visit. Nay, queen Margaret of Navarre carried the point farther, by saying, that it is uncivil in a gentleman to go out of his house, as is a common practice, to meet any one coming to see him, be he ever so great a man ; and that it is more respectful and civil to stay at home to receive him, were it only for fear of missing him by the way ; and that it is enough to accompany him to his apartment. For my part, who am for as little ceremony as possible in my own house, I often

The respect which gentlemen are obliged to pay to a great man who visits them.

\* Virg. *Æneid.* lib. iv. ver. 442.

forget both these vain offices. If any one be offended, what would you have me do? It is better to offend him once, than myself every day; for it would be a perpetual slavery. To what end do we avoid the servile attendance of courts, if we bring the same home to our own cottages? It is also a common rule in all assemblies, that those of less quality should be the first at the place of assignation, because to be waited on, is an honour, to which those of the greatest distinction have the best title.

The usual ceremony at the interview of princes.

Nevertheless, at the interview betwixt pope Clement VII. and king Francis, at Marseilles, in 1533, the king, after he had given order for the necessary preparations, went out of town, and gave the pope two or three days respite for his entry and refreshment, before he came to him. In like manner also, at the interview betwixt the same pope and the emperor Charles V. at Bologna, the latter end of the year 1532, the emperor gave leave to the pope to be there first, and then went thither himself. It is, they say, a common ceremony at the conferences of such princes, that the greatest should be at the place appointed before the others, nay before him in whose territories they are to meet; and the reason is, because it should seem proper for the inferiors to seek out and apply to the greater, and not he to them.

Too much nicety in civility is blameable.

Not every country only, but every city, and even every profession, has a particular form of civility. I was carefully enough educated when a child, have lived in too good company to be ignorant of the ceremonial laws of our French nation, and am able to train up others in the same knowledge. I love also to follow them, but not so servilely as to be enslaved to them all my life-time. They have some painful formalities, the omission of which, provided it be discretionary, and not through mistake, is no breach of decorum. I have often seen people rude by being over civil, and troublesome in their courtesy.

As for the rest, to know how to behave well, is a very useful science. Like gracefulness and beauty, it creates a liking at the very beginning of an acquaintance and familiarity, and, by consequence, opens a door for our instruction, by the example of others, and for displaying and producing ourselves for a model, if it has any thing in it that is instructive, and fit to be communicated.

The advantages of a well-regulated civility.

#### CHAPTER XIV.

*That the obstinate Defence of a Place that is not in Reason to be defended, deserves to be punished.*

**V**ALOUR has its bounds, as well as other virtues, which once transgressed, the next step is into the territories of vice; so that, unless a man be very perfect in its limits, which are indeed not easily to be distinguished, such ill-judged valour leads to rashness, obstinacy, and folly.

Valour and its limits.

From this consideration is derived the custom, in time of war, of punishing, even with death, such as are obstinate in defending a place which, by the rules of war, is not tenable: else men would be so confident, upon the hopes of impunity, that every hero would stop an army. The constable de Montmorency, at the siege of Pavia, having orders to pass the Tesin, and to take up his quarters in the suburb of St. Antony, being hindered from doing so by a tower at the end of the bridge, which was so obstinate as to stand a battery, he hanged up every man he found in it. And again, afterwards, when he accompanied the dauphin in his expedition beyond the Alps, and took the castle of Villane by storm, all within it were put to the sword by the enraged soldiers, except the captain and the ensign, whom he caused to be trussed up for the same reason. In like

Why too obstinate a defence of a place is punished.

manner the captain Martine du Bellay, then governor of Turin, in the same country, treated the captain de St. Bony, the rest of his men being cut to pieces at the taking of the place. But forasmuch as the strength or weakness of a place is always judged of by the number and weight of the forces that attack it (for a man might reasonably enough despise two culverins, that would be mad if he stood the battery of thirty cannon,) taking also into the account the power of the prince who is master of the field, his reputation, and the respect due to him, it is to be feared, the balance will incline a little on that side; and from hence it happens that such princes have so great an opinion of themselves and their measures, that thinking it unreasonable that any place should presume to make head against them, they put all to the sword that resist them, as long as their fortune continues, as we see by the proud and haughty forms of summoning towns, and denouncing war, savouring so much of barbarian insolence in use among the oriental princes, and their successors, to this day. And in that corner which the Portuguese lopped off from the Indies, they found some dominions in which it was an universal and inviolable law, that no enemy who was defeated by the king in person, or by his lieutenant or representative, should be entitled either to a ransom or mercy. So that, above all things, it is absolutely necessary for every man to take care lest he fall into the hands of a judge who is a victorious enemy, and armed for execution,

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## CHAPTER XV.

### *Of the Punishment of Cowardice.*

How  
cowardice  
ought to be  
punished in  
a soldier.

**I** ONCE heard of a prince, a very great warrior, who asserted, that a soldier ought not to be put to death because he had a faint heart; and that he said

this at table, upon being told the story of the proceedings against Monsieur de Vervins, and of his being sentenced to death for having given up Boulogne. Indeed, it is reasonable that a man should make a great difference betwixt faults which proceed from our weakness, and those that are absolutely owing to our malice; for in the latter we act wilfully against the rules of that reason which nature has planted in us; and in the former it seems that we may appeal for our vindication to that same nature, for having left us in such a state of imperfection and pusillanimity. Insomuch, that it has been thought by many, we are not blameable for any thing but what we commit against the light of our conscience: and it is partly upon this rule that those ground their opinion, who disapproved the inflicting capital punishments upon heretics and infidels; and on this also is partly founded their opinion, who hold that an advocate and a judge are not accountable for having failed in their commissions through ignorance.

Now, as to cowardice, it is certain that the most usual way of correcting it is by disgrace and ignominy. It is supposed that this rule was first practised by the legislator Charondas; and that before his time, those that fled from battle were, by the laws of Greece, punished with death:\* whereas he ordained, that they should only be exposed three days together, in the midst of a public square, dressed in woman's apparel, hoping that they might still become useful, when this shame had roused their courage; choosing rather, as Tertullian says, *Suffundere malis hominis sanguinem quam effundere*,† i. e. rather to raise the blood of a man in his cheeks, than to draw it out of his veins. It seems also, that heretofore those who fled were, by the Roman laws,

The common punishment of cowardice.

\* Diodorus of Sicily, lib. xii. cap. 4.

† Tertullian in Apologet. p. 583, tom. ii. edit. at Paris, 1566. In this place Tertullian speaks of a most severe law against debtors, which was annulled by the emperor Severus; who, instead of putting them to death, ordered their effects to be seized, and sold.

put to death: for Ammianus Marcellinus says,\* that the emperor Julian condemned ten of his soldiers, who ran away in the action with the Parthians, to be broke, and then, according to the ancient laws, to be put to death. Yet, at another time, he sentenced others,† for a like fault, only to pass their time among the prisoners and baggage. The punishment of the Roman soldiers, who fled from the battle of Cannæ, and of those, in the same war, who ran away with Cneus Fulvius, at his defeat, did not extend to death. But it is to be feared that shame makes such delinquents desperate, and renders them not only cool friends, but warm enemies.

How the  
governor of  
a place was  
punished  
for his  
cowardice.

In 1523, Monsieur de Franget, a lieutenant in marshal de Chatillon's company, being appointed governor of Fontarabia, by the marshal de Chabannes, in the room of Monsieur de Lude, surrendered it to the Spaniards, for which he was degraded from the rank of nobility, and both he and his posterity declared plebeians, taxable for ever, and incapable of bearing arms; which severe sentence was executed at Lyons. In 1536, all the gentlemen who were in Guise, suffered the like punishment, when the count de Nassau entered that town, and others have been treated in the same manner since, for the like offence. Nevertheless, in an instance of such gross and palpable ignorance or cowardice as exceeds all common cases, it is but reason to take it for a sufficient proof of treachery and malice, and to punish it as such.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### *A Passage of some Ambassadors.*

A prudent  
custom ob-  
served by  
Montaigne.

IN my travels, I make it my practice to put those I discourse with upon the subjects they best under-

\* Lib. xxiv. cap. 4, of the Lyons edit. in 1600. † Lib. xxv. cap. 1.

stand, that I may learn something from their information, than which no school in the world can afford a better method of improvement :

*Basti al nocchiero ragionar de venti,  
Al bisfolco de i tori, e le sue piaghe  
Conti'l guerrier, conti'l pastor gli armenti.\**

*Navita de ventis, de tauris narrat arator,  
Ememorat miles vulnera, pastor ovis.*

The pilot best of winds does talk,  
The peasant of his cattle ;  
The shepherd of his fleecy flock ;  
The soldier of his battle.

For it commonly happens, on the contrary, that people choose to be dealing in other men's business rather than their own, as thinking it the gain of so much new reputation ; witness the jeer that Periander received from Archidamus, viz. " That he abandoned " the character of an able physician, to gain that of " a sorry poet." Do but observe what a deal of pains Cæsar takes to let us know his invention in building bridges, or constructing machines for war, and how concise he is when he comes to speak of the duties of his profession, valour, and military conduct. His exploits prove him a very excellent commander ; but he desired also to be known for as good an engineer, an art in some measure foreign to his character. Dionysius the elder was a very great general, as well became his fortune, but he studied chiefly to recommend himself by poetry, for which however he had no talent. A gentleman of the long robe being brought some days ago to a study, which was furnished with all sorts of books, both of his own and all other faculties, took no occasion to entertain himself with any of them, but began very abruptly and magisterially to descant upon a barricado over-against the study, which a hundred captains and common soldiers see every day without taking any

\* These Italian verses of Ariosto are a perfect imitation of the distich in Propertius, which follows it, lib. ii. eleg. i. v. 43, 44.



notice, or affecting to appear intelligent on the subject:

*Optat ephippia los piger, optat arare caballus.\* i. e.*

The lazy ox would saddle have and bit,  
The steed a yoke, neither for either fit.

This is the way for a man never to do any thing considerable; so that he must always endeavour to leave the architect, the painter, the shoemaker, and every other mechanic to his own trade.

Of what  
importance  
it is to  
know the  
profession  
of a writer.

To this purpose, in reading history, which is a subject equally well adapted to every person, I have been used to consider what kind of men are the writers. If they make no other profession than that of literature, their style and language is what I chiefly attend to; if they are physicians, I am the more ready to credit them in what they tell us of the air, the health and constitution of princes, of wounds and diseases; if lawyers, we are by them to be guided in the controversies of *Meum* and *Tuum*, the nature of the laws, and civil government, and the like; if divines, in church affairs, ecclesiastical censures, dispensations, and marriages; if courtiers, in manners and ceremonies; if soldiers, the things that belong to their duty, and especially in the narratives they give of actions wherein they have been personally present; and if ambassadors, we are to observe their negotiations, intelligences and practices, and the manner of conducting them. This is the reason why (though perhaps I should have lightly passed it over in another, without insisting on it) I paused, and maturely considered a passage in the history writ by M. de Langey, a man of very great understanding in things of that nature, which was his account of the remonstrances that were made by the emperor Charles V. at the consistory of Rome, in the presence of the bishop of Maçon and Monsieur de Velley, our ambassadors, wherein he mixed several invectives against our nation; and amongst others, said, "That

\* Horace, ep. xiv. lib. i. ver. 49.

“ If his officers and soldiers were not better to be  
 “ trusted, and had not more skill in the art of war,  
 “ than those of the king; he would go that moment  
 “ to the king with a rope about his neck, and sue to  
 “ him for mercy.” It really seems as if the emperor  
 had no better opinion of our soldiery, because he  
 happened afterwards, twice or thrice in his life, to  
 say the very same thing; and he also challenged the  
 king to fight him in his shirt with sword and dagger,  
 in a boat. Monsieur de Langey, proceeding in his  
 history, adds, that the said ambassadors in their des-  
 patches to the king, concealed the greatest part from  
 him, and particularly the two last passages. Now I  
 wonder how any ambassador can excuse himself for  
 not giving his master the due information of things  
 of such consequence, coming from such a person, and  
 spoke in so great an assembly. I should rather con-  
 ceive it had been the servant’s duty faithfully to have  
 represented things in their true light, as they hap-  
 pened, to the end that the sovereign might be at  
 liberty to order, judge, and dispose of matters as he  
 pleased: for the disguising or concealing the truth  
 from him, lest he should take it in a wrong sense,  
 and be incited to imprudent measures, should seem,  
 methinks, rather to belong to him who gives law,  
 than to him who receives it; to him who is the  
 guardian and master of the school, and not to him  
 who ought to look upon himself as inferior, not only  
 in authority, but in prudence and good counsel. Be  
 this as it will, I should not like to be served so in  
 my little sphere.

Whether a  
 prince’s  
 ambassa-  
 dors ought  
 to conceal  
 any thing  
 from him  
 of his own  
 affairs.

Mankind are so much disposed to reject the con-  
 trol of authority, that no advantage which a supe-  
 rior derives from those who serve him, ought to be  
 so dear to him as their sincere and cordial obedience.  
 To obey him from discretion, and not from subjec-  
 tion,\* is to injure the office of command. P. Crassus,

Nothing  
 more dear  
 to a supe-  
 rior, than  
 the hearty  
 obedience  
 of his in-  
 feriors.

\* I find in Barbeyrac’s notes upon Puffendorf, that this thought  
 is taken from Aulus Gellius, lib. i. cap. 13.

whom the Romans reckoned happy in five respects,\* having, while he was consul in *Asia*, ordered an engineer of Greece to bring him the biggest of two masts of ships that he had seen at Athens, for a certain battering engine which he proposed to make with it, the engineer, presuming upon his own discretion, thought fit to make a different choice, and carried him the least of the two masts, which, according to the rules of art, was also the most convenient; Crassus, having patiently heard his reasons, caused him to be very heartily scourged, thereby preferring correction to the profit he might have received from the work. Such strict obedience, however, is, perhaps, due only to commands that are precise and peremptory. The function of an ambassador is not so limited, but, in many particulars, he is left to the direction of his own judgment. Those who are invested with such a character are not barely the executioners of their sovereign's will and pleasure, but by their advice they form and model it; and I have, in my time, known persons in authority reprov'd, for having rather obeyed the express words of the king's letters, than conformed to the exigency of affairs. Men of understanding do, even to this day, condemn the practice of the kings of Persia, in giving their lieutenants and agents such precise instructions, that, upon every minute difficulty, they are obliged to have recourse to their orders; this delay, in so vast an extent of dominion, being often attended with great inconvenience. And Crassus, in writing to a man who professed and understood mechanics, and informing him of the purpose for which he intended this mast, did he not seem to consult his opinion, and invite him to interpose his judgment?

\* That he was very rich, most noble, most eloquent, most skilful in the law, and the highest in the priesthood, or *pontifex maximus*. Auli Gellii Noctes Atticæ, lib. i. cap. 13.

## CHAPTER XVII.

*Of Fear.*

*Obstupui, steteruntque comæ, et vox faucibus hæsit.\**

I was amaz'd, struck speechless, and my hair  
On end upon my head did wildly stare.

I AM not a good naturalist (as they call it†) and scarce know by what springs fear operates in us; but this I know, that it is a strange passion, and the physicians say, that there is not one of all the passions that sooner dethrones our judgment from its natural seat. I have actually seen a great many persons whom fear has rendered frantic, and it is certain, that in persons the most composed, it creates terrible confusion while the fit is upon them. To say nothing of the vulgar, to whom it one while represents their great grandsires risen out of their graves in their shrouds, another while hobgoblins, spectres, and chimeras; but even amongst the soldiers, who ought to be possessed with the least share of it, how often have they mistaken a flock of harmless sheep for armed squadrons, reeds and bulrushes for pikes and lances, friends for enemies, and the white cross of France for the red one of Spain? In 1527, when the duke of Bourbon took Rome, an ensign, who was upon guard at the Bourg St. Pierre, was so frightened at the very first alarm, that he threw himself out of the breach with the colours in his hand, and ran directly from the town upon the enemy, thinking all the while that he was proceeding towards the interior fortifications of the city, till at last, seeing the duke of Bourbon's men draw up to face the besieged, who they thought were making a sally.

\* Virg. *Æneid*. lib. ii. ver. 774.

† Montaigne shews, by this parenthesis, that the term naturalist was but just adopted into the French language.

he found his mistake, and turning about retreated through the same breach by which he had issued, but not before he had advanced above a quarter of a mile into the field against the besiegers. It did not fall out quite so happily for captain Julius's ensign, when St. Pol was taken from us by the count de Bures and M. de Reu, for he being so very much scared as to throw himself out of the town, colours and all, through a port-hole, he was cut to pieces by the besiegers. At the same siege, a gentleman was seized with such a fright, that he sunk down dead in the breach without any wound.

The opposite effects produced by fear.

The like passion sometimes operates upon a whole multitude. In one of Germanicus's encounters with the Germans, two great parties were so intimidated, that they fled different ways, each running to the place from which the other set out. Sometimes it adds wings to the heels, as it did to the two first, and sometimes nails the feet to the ground, and fetters them; as we read of the emperor Theophilus,\* who, in a battle wherein he was defeated by the Agaranes, was so astonished and stupified, that he had no power to fly, till Manuel, one of the chief generals of his army, having jogged and shook him so as to rouse him out of his trance, said to him, "Sir, if you will not follow me, I will kill you; for it is better that you should lose your life, than by being taken prisoner to lose your empire."

Fear is sometimes an incentive to feats of valour.

When fear is so violent as to deprive men of all sense, both of duty and honour, it makes them act like desperadoes. In the first fair battle which the Romans lost against Hannibal, in the consulship of Sempronius,† a body of at least 10,000 foot, which had taken fright, seeing no other escape for their cowardice, forced their way through the bulk of the enemy's army, which they penetrated with prodigious fury, and made a great slaughter of the Carthaginians, by that means purchasing an ignominious

\* Quintus Curtius, lib. iii. sect. 11.

† Tit. Liv. lib. xxi. cap. 55.

flight, as dearly as they might have done a glorious victory.

The thing I am most afraid of is, fear, because it is a passion which supersedes and suspends all others. It suspends every other passion. What affliction could be greater and more just than that of Pompey's friends, who in his ship were spectators of that horrid massacre? yet so it was, that the fear of the Egyptian vessels,\* which they saw approaching, stifled that passion to such a degree, that they did nothing but press the rowers to make haste away, for fear of being surrounded by the enemy, till they arrived at Tyre, when, being delivered from their apprehension, they had leisure to turn their thoughts to the loss they had so lately sustained, and gave vent to those lamentations and tears which the more prevalent passion had suspended :

*Tum pavor sapientiam omnem mihi ex animo expectorat.*† i. e.

My mind, which fear had then oppress'd,  
Was of all judgment dispospossess'd.

Such as have been soundly thrashed in some skirmish, may, yet all bruised and bloody as they are, be brought on again next day to the charge ; but those who have once conceived a dread of the enemy, will never be brought so much as to look him in the face. They who are in fear every day of losing their estates, of banishment, or of being made slaves, live in perpetual anguish, without appetite or rest ; whereas such as are naturally poor slaves and exiles, often live as happy as those in better condition. And so many people who, not able to bear the terrors of fear, have hanged, drowned, and thrown themselves from precipices, afford a convincing proof that fear is even more vexatious and insupportable than death.

The Greeks mention another kind of fear, proceeding from no visible cause, but the effect of an impulse from heaven ; so that whole armies and nations have been struck with it. Such was that which Panic fears.

\* Cicero Tusc. Quest. lib. iii. cap. 27. † Id. lib. iv. cap. 9.  
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brought so wonderful a desolation upon Carthage, where nothing was to be heard but outcries and shrieks; the inhabitants ran out of their houses as if they were ready to fall on their heads, and they attacked, wounded, and killed one another, as if they had been so many enemies come to take their city.\* They were all, in short, in the strangest disorder and distraction, till by prayer and sacrifices they had appeased the anger of the gods. This is what they call panic terrors.†

## CHAPTER XVIII.

*That we are not to judge of Man's Happiness before his Death.*

*hinc videtur illi Carthaginiensi*

— *Scilicet ultima semper*

*Expectanda dies homini est, dicique beatus*

*Ante obitum nemo supremoque funera debet.‡*

Till man's last day is come we should not dare,  
Of happiness to say what was his share;  
Since of no man can it be truly said,  
That he is happy till he first be dead.

No man's  
happiness  
to be judg-  
ed of, till  
death  
comes.

**T**HERE is scarce a boy at school but knows the story of king Croesus to this purpose, who, being taken prisoner by Cyrus, and condemned to suffer death, cried out on the scaffold, O Solon! Solon!§ which being reported to Cyrus, and he inquiring what it meant, Croesus gave him to understand, that he now was convinced, to his cost, of the truth of that warning which was formerly given him by Solon, viz. To call no man happy; how much soever fortune smiled upon him, till he had passed over the last day of his life, by reason of the uncertainty and vicissi-

\* Diodorus of Sicily, lib. xv. cap. 7.

† Id. ibid. and Plutarch in his Treatise of Isis and Osiris, cap. 8.

‡ Ovid. Metam. lib. iii. fab. 2, ver. 5.

§ Herodot. lib. i. p. 40.

tude of human affairs, which are apt to change, in an instant, from one condition to the opposite. Therefore it was, that Agesilaus said, in answer to one who pronounced the king of Persia a happy man for coming very young to such a height of power, "It is true, but neither was Priam at such an age unhappy." We know that some of the kings of Macedon, successors of Alexander the Great, were reduced to be joiners and carpenters at Rome; a tyrant of Sicily, to be school-master at Corinth; a conqueror of one half of the world, and general of many armies, a miserable suppliant to the beggarly officers of a king of Egypt. So dear did the great Pompey pay for a reprieve, of five or six months, from death. In the time of our fathers, Lewis Sforza, the tenth duke of Milan, who had so long made all Italy tremble, died in prison at Loches,† and what was worse for him, he had suffered imprisonment ten years. That most beautiful queen,‡ the widow of the greatest king in Christendom, did not she die by the hand of an executioner? Base and barbarous cruelty! and to this might be added a thousand more instances of the same kind; for, as storms and tempests are provoked at the pride and loftiness of our structures, it would seem that there are spirits above which envy the grandeur of this lower world:

*Usque adeo res humanas vis abdita quædum  
Obterit, et pulchros fasces, sævasque secures  
Proculcare, hac ludibrio sibi habere videtur. §*

And hence we fancy UNSEEN POWERS in things,  
Whose force and will such strange confusion brings,  
And spurn and overthrow our greatest kings.

\* Plutarch, in his notable Sayings of the Lacedæmonians,

† In the reign of Lewis XII. who confined him there, Anno 1500.

‡ Mary, queen of Scotland, and mother of James I. king of England, was beheaded in this kingdom, by order of queen Elizabeth, in 1587. Montaigne surely wrote this long after the passage in the following chapter, where he tells us, that the year he then wrote in, was but 1572; but we do not find this particular in the quarto edition of 1588.

§ Lucr. lib. v. ver. 1231, &c.



It would seem also as if fortune sometimes lies in wait to surprise the last day of our lives, to show the power she has in one moment to overthrow what she was so many years erecting, and makes us cry out with Laberius, *Nimirum hac die unâ plus viri mihi quàm vivendum fuit* ;\* i. e. I have therefore lived one day too long. And in this sense, it were reasonable to attend to the good advice of Solon ; but he being a philosopher, with which sort of men the favours and frowns of fortune stand for nothing, either to the making a man happy or unhappy, and with whom grandeur and power, accidents of quality, are in a manner quite indifferent, I am apt to think, that he had some farther aim, and meant, that the very felicity of our lives, which depends on the tranquillity and satisfaction of a generous mind, and on the resolution and stability of a well-composed soul, ought never to be pronounced as the enjoyment of any man, till he has been seen to play the last, and doubtless the hardest act of his part. In all the rest there may have been some disguise. Either these fine lessons of philosophy are only calculated to keep us in countenance, or accidents, not touching us to the quick, allow us to preserve the same gravity ; but in this last scene, betwixt death and us, there is no more playing the counterfeit, we must speak plain, and if there be any purity and simplicity at the bottom, it must be discovered :

*Nam veræ voces tum demum pectore ab imo  
Ejiciuntur, et eripitur persona, manet res.†*

For then their words will with their thoughts agree,  
And all the mask pull'd off, show what they be.

This last act, therefore, ought to be the criterion or touch-stone by which all the other actions of our life are to be tried and sifted. It is the grand day, it is the day that is judge of all the rest ; “ It is the “ day,” says one of the ancients, “ by which all my

\* Macrobius, lib. ii. cap. 7.

† Lucret. lib. iii. v. 57, 58.

"years past are to be judged." To death do I submit the trial of the fruit of my studies. It will then appear whether my discourses came only from my mouth, or from my heart. I have known many who, by their death, have given a good or a bad reputation to their whole lives. Scipio, the father-in-law of Pompey,\* by dying well, expunged the ill opinion which had till then been conceived of him. Epaminondas being interrogated which of the three men he had in greatest esteem, Chabrias, Iphicrates, or himself;† "We must all die," said he, "before that question can be resolved." It would really be doing vast injustice to that personage to scan him, without considering how great and honourable was his end. The Almighty has ordered every thing as it best pleased him; but, in my time, three of the most execrable persons that ever I knew, most abominably vicious, and likewise the most infamous, died natural deaths, and, in all circumstances, perfectly composed. There are some deaths that are grave and happy. I have seen the thread‡ of a person's life

\* This remark is taken, if I mistake not, from Seneca. It is a pretty long passage, but so curious a one, that I cannot help transcribing it here. Seneca, desirous to fortify his friend against the terrors of death, said to him, in the first place, 'I should prevail on you with more ease, were I to show, that not only heroes have despised the moment of the soul's departure out of the body, but that even dastards have in this matter equalled those of the greatest fortitude of mind.' And immediately after he adds, 'Even like that, Scipio, the father-in-law of Cn. Pompey, who, being drove by contrary winds to the coast of Africa, when he saw his ship detained by the enemy, stabbed himself with his own sword; and to those who asked him where the general was, said, "The general is well." This word equalled him to his superiors, and did not suffer the glory fatal to the Scipios in Africa to be interrupted. It was a great task to conquer Carthage, but a harder to conquer death.' Seneca, Epist. 24.

† Plutarch, in his notable Sayings of the ancient kings, princes, and generals.

‡ It is very probable, that Montaigne speaks here of his friend Boetius, at whose death he was present, as appears by a speech which Montaigne caused to be printed at Paris, in 1571, wherein he mentions the most remarkable particulars of Boetius's sickness and death. As this speech does honour to both these eminent friends, and is become very scarce, I shall insert it hereafter.

cut in his progress to wonderful advancement, and in the prime of his years, who made so glorious an exit, that, in my opinion, his ambitious and courageous projects had nothing so sublime in them, as the manner in which he bore their interruption; and he arrived, without completing his course, at the place he proposed, with more grandeur and glory, than he could desire or hope for; anticipating, by his fall, the fame and power to which he aspired in his career. In the judgment I form of another man's life, I always observe how he behaves at the end of it; and the chief study of my own, is, that my latter end may be decent, calm, and silent.

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## CHAPTER XIX.

*That he who studies Philosophy, learns to die.*

What is the  
study of  
philoso-  
phy.

CICERO says, "That the study of philosophy is "nothing more or less than a man's preparation for "his death." The reason of which is, because study and contemplation do in some sort withdraw and employ the soul apart from the body, which is a kind of discipline for death, and a resemblance of it; or else, because all the wisdom and reasoning in the world terminates in this point, to teach us not to fear to die. And to say the truth, either our reason abuses us, or it ought to have no other aim but our satisfaction, and no other exercise, in short, but to make us live well, and, as the holy Scripture says,\* at our ease. The opinions of all mankind agree in this, that pleasure is our end, though men use divers means to attain to it, otherwise they would be rejected as soon as started; for who would give ear to a man that should establish our affliction and misery for his end? The disputes of the philosophic sects

\* Ecclesiastes, chap. iii. ver. 12. "I know that there is no good in them, but for a man to rejoice and do good in his life."

in this point are merely verbal, *Transcurramus solertissimas nugas*; \* i. e. Let us skip over those learned trifles, in which there is more obstinacy and quibbling than is consistent with so sacred a profession; for what character soever a man undertakes to personate, he ever mixes his own part with it.

Let all the philosophers say what they will, the mark at which we all aim, even in virtue itself, is pleasure. I love to rattle this word in their ears, because it is so very grating to them; and if it denotes any supreme delight, or excessive satisfaction, it is more owing to the assistance of virtue, than to any other aid. This pleasure, for being more gay, nervous, robust, and manly, is only the more seriously voluptuous; and we ought to give it the name of pleasure, as that which is more favourable, gentle, and natural; not that of vigour, from which we have denominated it. The other more sordid pleasure, if it deserved so fair a name, it ought to be upon account of concurrence, not by privilege. I do not think it less free from inconveniences and crosses than virtue. Besides that the enjoyment of it is more momentary and unsubstantial; it has its watchings, fastings, and labours, even to sweat and blood; and moreover has so many several sorts of wounding passions in particular, and so stupid a satiety attending it, that it is as bad as doing penance. We are very much mistaken in supposing that its inconveniences serve as a spur to it, and as a seasoning for its sweetness, as we see in nature, that one contrary is quickened by another; and to say, when we come to virtue, that the like consequences and difficulties overwhelm it, and render it austere and inaccessible; whereas, much more aptly than in voluptuousness, they ennoble, sharpen, and heighten the divine and perfect pleasure which virtue procures us. He is certainly very unworthy of being acquainted with it, who weighs the expense against the profit, and knows

How pleasure is the aim and fruit of virtue.

\* Seneca, epist. 117.

neither its charms nor how to use it. They who preach to us that the pursuit of it is rugged and painful, but the fruition pleasant, what do they mean, but that it is always disagreeable? For what human means ever arrived to the attainment of it? The most perfect have been forced to content themselves with aspiring to it, and to approach, without ever possessing it. Of all the pleasures which we know, the very pursuit of them is pleasant. The attempt savours of the quality of the thing which it has in view. The felicity and rectitude which shines in virtue, fills up all its apartments and avenues even from its first entrance to its utmost limits.

The contempt of death one of the principal benefits of virtue,

One of the chief benefits of virtue is, the contempt of death, an advantage which accommodates human life with a soft and easy tranquillity, and gives us a pure and amiable taste of it, without which every other pleasure is extinct; which is the reason why all the rules of philosophy centre and concur in this one article. And though they all unanimously teach us in like manner to despise sorrow, poverty, and other accidents to which the life of man is subject, yet they are not so solicitous about it, not only because these accidents do not so necessarily require it, many men passing their whole lives without feeling poverty, sickness, or sorrow, as Xenophilus,\* the musician, who lived to the age of a hundred and six, in perfect health; but also because at the worst, death can, whenever he pleases, cut short, and put an end to all other inconveniences: but as to death it is inevitable:

*Omnes eodem cogimur; omnium*

*Versatur urna; serius, oryx*

*Sors exitura, et nos in æternum*

*Exilium inpositura cyrbæ.† i. e.*

\* *Omnis humani incommodi expers*, (says Valerius Maximus, lib. viii. cap. 13, in *Externis*, sect. 3.) in *summo perfectissima splendore doctrinæ extinctus est*; i. e. After having lived free from every human ailment, he died in the highest reputation of being perfect master of his science.

† *Hôr. lib. ii. ode iii. ver. 25.*

To the same fate we must all yield by turn,  
 Sooner or later, all must to the urn :  
 When Charon calls aboard, we must not stay,  
 But to eternal exile sail away.

By consequence, if it fright us, it is a continual torment, of which there can be no mitigation ; and there is no way by which we can possibly avoid it. We may incessantly turn our heads this way and that way, as if we were in a suspicious country, *que quasi sarum Tantalò, semper impendet*,\* i. e. like the rock of Tantalus, it always hangs over our heads, ready to fall. Our courts of justice often sent condemned criminals to be executed at the place where the fact was committed : and were they to be carried to all the fine houses by the way, and entertained with as good cheer as you please,

—*non Siculæ dapes  
 Dulcem elaborabunt saporem :  
 Non avium citharæque cantus  
 Somnum reducent.*†

The best Sicilian dainties would not please,  
 Nor yet of birds, or harps, the harmonies  
 Once charm asleep, or close their watchful eyes.

Do you think it would make them merry, or that the fatal end of their journey being continually before their eyes, would not deprave their tastes, so as to have no relish for any of these delicacies :

*Audit iter numeratque dies, spatique viarum  
 Metitur vitam, torquetur peste futura.*† i. e.

He time and space computes by length of ways,  
 Sums up the number of his few dark days ;  
 And his sad thoughts, full of his fatal doom,  
 Have room for nothing but the blow to come.

The end of our race is death ; it is the necessary object of our view, which, if it frights us, how is it possible we should advance a step, without a fit of an ague ? the remedy which the vulgar use is not to

\* Cic. de Finib. lib. i. cap. 18.

† Hor. lib. iii. ode i. ver. 18, &c.

‡ Claud. lib. ii. ver. 137, 138.

think of it : but from what brutish stupidity can they be so grossly blind ? they must bridle the ass by the tail.

*Qui capite ipse suo instituit vestigia retro.\**

He who the order of his steps has laid,  
To light, and nat'ral motion retrogade.

It is no wonder if he be often taken in the snare. Our people are frightened at the bare mention of death, and many cross themselves at it, as if it were the name of the devil. Because there is mention made of death in last wills and testaments, you are not to expect they will set their hands to them till the physician has utterly given them over : and then, betwixt grief and terror, what excellent judgment they have to carve for you, God only knows ! The Romans, observing that this monosyllable, death, was very shocking to the people's ears, and that they thought it an ominous sound, found out a way to soften it, and to express it periphrastically, and instead of saying, in plain terms, such a one is dead, to say, such a one has lived, or has ceased to live : for if the word life was but mentioned, though past, yet it was some comfort. From hence we have borrowed our phrase, The late Mr. John, &c. Peradventure, as the saying is, If the term is worth my money.† I was born betwixt eleven and twelve o'clock at noon, on the last day of February, 1533, as we now compute, beginning the year with January, and it is now just a fortnight since I was complete thirty-nine years of age. It is not certain, at least, but I may live as many more ; yet not to think of a thing so remote, would be folly. For why ? the young and the old quit life upon the same terms, and no one departs out of it, otherwise than if he had but just before en-

\* Lucret, lib. iv. v. 474.

† This proverb is mostly used by such as, having borrowed money for a long term, take no care for the payment, flattering themselves that something will happen, in the mean time, for their benefit or discharge.

tered into it ; moreover, there is no man so very old, who thinks of Methusalem, but imagines he has still a constitution for twenty years longer. But, thou fool ! who has ensured, or rather assured, unto thee the term of thy life ? thou believest what the physicians say ; but rather consult fact and experience. According to the common course of things, it is an extraordinary favour thou hast lived so long. Thou hast already exceeded the ordinary term of life ; and that thou mayst be convinced of this, do but call to mind thy acquaintance, and reckon up how many more have died before they arrived at thy age, than ever attained to it. Do but make a register of such, even whose lives have been distinguished with fame, and I will lay a wager, that more have died under thirty-five years of age than above it. It is highly rational, and pious too, to take example by the human existence of JESUS CHRIST himself, who ended his life at thirty-three years of age. The greatest man, too, that ever was, of mere men, viz. Alexander, died also at the same age. How many ways has death to surprise us ?

*Quid quisque videt, nunquam homini satis :  
Cautum est in horas.\* i. e.*

What men should shun is never known,  
We, unprovided, are undone :

Or,  
Man fain would shun, but 'tis not in his pow'r  
T' evade the dangers of each threat'ning hour.

To omit fevers and pleurisies, who would ever have imagined, that a duke of Brittany should be pressed to death in a crowd, as one was in 1305, in the reign of Philip the Fair, at pope Clement's entry into Lyons ? Have we not seen one of our kings† killed at his diversion, and one of his ancestors die by being

\* Horace, lib. ii. ode 13. ver. 13, 14.

† Henry II. (of France) mortally wounded in a tournament by the count de Montgomery, one of the captains of his guards.



pushed down by a hog?\* Æschylus, being threatened by the fall of a house, ran out of it into the fields, where he was knocked on the head by a shell-fish which an eagle dropped from its talons.† Another, viz. Anacreon, was choked with a grape stone;‡ an emperor died by the scratch of a comb, in combing his head.§ Æmilius Lepidus lost his life by a stumble at his own threshold; and Aufidius lost his life by a jostle against the door as he entered the council chamber.|| Cornelius Gallus, the prætor; Tigillinus, captain of the watch at Rome; Ludovico, son of Guido de Gonzaga, marquis of Mantua, died betwixt the very thighs of a woman. And a worse instance of this was, Speusippus,¶ a platonic philosopher, and one of our popes. The poor judge Bebius, during the reprieve of eight days which he gave to a criminal, was himself seized, and lost his life.\*\* Whilst Caius Julius, the physician, was anointing the eye of his patient, death closed his own.†† And, to come nearer home, a brother of mine, captain St. Martin, who had already given sufficient proofs of his valour, though but three and twenty years of age, playing at tennis, received a blow from the ball, just above his right ear, which made no scar nor contusion, so that he did not so much as sit down, or rest himself upon it; yet, in five or six hours after, he died of an apoplexy, occasioned by that stroke. These examples being, as we see, so frequent and common, how is it possible that a man can disengage

\* Philip, or, as some say, Lewis VII. son of Lewis le Gros, who was crowned in the life-time of his father.

† Valerius Maximus, lib. ix. cap. 12, in externis, cap. 2.

‡ Plin. Nat. Hist. lib. vii. cap. 53. § Ibid. sect. 8.

|| Ibid. lib. vii. cap. 53.

¶ Tertullian affirms this, but without much foundation. Audio, says he, in his Apologetic, cap. 46, that Speusippus, one of Plato's disciples, died while he was committing adultery. As to the death of Speusippus, Diogenes Laertius says, That, being shattered with a violent palsy, and broke down with the weight of old age and vexation, he at last put an end to his own life.

\*\* Pliny's Nat. Hist. lib. vii. cap. 53.

†† Ibid.

himself from the thoughts of death, or avoid fancying that it is ready every moment to take us by the collar? What does it signify, you will say, which way it comes to pass, provided a man does not torment himself with the apprehension of it? I am of this opinion, that if a man could by any means screen himself from it, he would, though it were by a calf's skin. I am not the man that would flinch, for all I desire is to be composed, and the best recreation that I can give myself, I take hold of, be it as inglorious and unfashionable as you please :

— *Pretulerim delirus inersque videri,  
Dum mea delectant mala me, vel denique fallant,  
Quam sapere, et ringi.\* i. e.*

I would be rather thought a doating wight,  
If my own errors my own self delight,  
Than know they're such, and owe myself a spight.

Or,

A fool, or sluggard, let me censur'd be,  
Whilst my own faults delight or cozen me,  
Rather than know them such, and feel the shame,  
That my performances have hurt my fame.

But it is a folly to think of carrying the point by that means. People go and come ; they gad abroad, and dance, and not a word of death. All this is fine ; but when it comes either to themselves, wives, children, or friends, surprising them unawares, what torments do they feel, what outcries do they make, what madness and despair possess them ! did ever you see any people so dejected, so changed, and so confounded ? There is an absolute necessity therefore of making more early preparation for it. And we should pay too dear for the neglect, could any man be supposed so void of sense as to be guilty of it, which I think utterly impossible. Were it an enemy that a man could escape from, I would advise him to borrow the armour even of cowardice itself for that purpose ; but, seeing it is not to be avoided, and that it catches

\* Hor. lib. ii. ep. 2. ver. 126.

the runaway and the poltroon, as well as the gallant man :

*Mors et fugacem persequitur virum,  
Nec parcat imbellis juveniæ  
Poplitibus, imidoque tergo.\* i. e.*

No speed of foot prevents death of his prize,  
He cut the hamstrings of the man that flies ;  
Nor spares the fearful stripling's back, who starts  
To run beyond the reach of all its darts.

Forasmuch also as there is no armour proof enough to secure us,

*Ille licit ferro, cautus se condat, et ære  
Mors tamen inclusum protrahet inde caput.† i. e.*

Though arm'd with steel, or brass, against his fate,  
Death will his soul and body separate.

let us learn bravely to stand our ground against its attack : and that we may, in the first place, deprive it of the greatest advantage it has over us, let us take a course quite contrary to the common way. Let us disarm it of its strangeness ; let us converse and be familiar with it, and have nothing so frequent in our thoughts as death ; let us, at every turn, represent it to our imagination, and view it in all aspects. At the stumbling of a horse, at the fall of a tile upon our heads, or the least prick of a pin, let us make this reflection at the very instant, Well, and what if it had been death itself ? And thereupon let us harden and fortify ourselves. Amidst all our feasting and jollity, let us evermore curb ourselves with the remembrance of our condition, and not suffer ourselves to be so far transported with pleasure, as to forget how many ways this merriment of ours exposes us to death, and with how many dangers it threatens us. This was the practice of the Egyptians, who, in the height of their feastings and carousals, caused the

\* Hor. lib. iii. ode 2. ver. 14, &c.

† Propert. lib. iii. eleg. 13, ver 25, 26.

dried skeleton of a man to be brought into the room, to serve for a memento to their guests.\*

*Omnem crede diem tibi diluxisse supremum,  
Grata superveniet, quæ non sperabitur hora.* † i. e.

Think ev'ry rising sun will be thy last ;  
And then the next day's light thine eyes shall see,  
As unexpected, will more welcome be.

Where death waits for us, is uncertain ; therefore let us look for it every where. The premeditation of death is the premeditation of liberty. He who has learned to die, has forgot what it is to be a slave. There is no such thing as evil in life to him, who rightly comprehends, that the being deprived of life is not an evil. The knowing how to die, frees us from all subjection and constraint. When the unhappy king of Macedon, who was Paulus Æmilius's prisoner, sent to entreat him that he would not lead him in triumph, the latter made answer, that truly is in your own power. ‡ In truth, if nature does not lend a little assistance in all things, it will be difficult for art and industry to make any progress. I am myself not melancholy, but thoughtful, and there is nothing which I have more frequently entertained myself with, than the ideas of death, even in the most licentious season of my life, in the pleasant spring of florid age :

*Jucundum cum ætas florida vir agere.* §

In the company of ladies, and in the height of play, some have, perhaps, thought me brooding upon jealousy, or on the uncertainty of some hope, while I was entertaining myself with the remembrance of some person who was lately surprised with a fever which carried him off after an entertainment like this, when his head was full of idle fancies, love,

\* Herodotus, lib. ii. p. 193. † Hor. lib. i. epist. 4, ver. 13, 14.

‡ Plutarch, in the life of Æmilius, ch. 17. of Amyot's translation. Cic. Tusc. Quest. lib. v. cap. 40.

§ Catullus, ep. 66, ver. 16.

and jollity, as mine was then, and that therefore I had the more to answer for:

*Jam fuerit, nec post unquam revocare licebit.\** i. e.

Ere while he had a being amongst men,  
Now gone, and ne'er to be recall'd again.

Yet that thought did not add a wrinkle to my forehead more than any other. It is impossible but such imaginations must, at their first conception, sting us; but by often revolving them in our minds, and making them familiar to us, they are sure at the long-run to lose their sting: otherwise, for my part, I should have been in a perpetual fright and frenzy; for never was a man so distrustful of his life, never man so indifferent about its duration. Neither the health which I have hitherto enjoyed with great vigour, and with little interruption, prolongs, nor does sickness contract my hopes of life. Methinks, I have an escape every minute, and it eternally runs in my mind, whatever may fall out another day, may as well happen to-day. Hazards and dangers do, in truth, little or nothing hasten our end; and if we consider how many more remain and hang over our heads, besides the accident that seems to threaten us immediately, we shall find that the sound and the sick, those who are at sea, and those who are at land, those who are abroad in the wars, and those who enjoy tranquillity at home, are the one as near death as the other. No man is more frail than the other, nor more certain of the morrow.† For any thing I have to do before I die, I should think the longest leisure short to finish it, if it took but an hour's time. A certain person, the other day, looking into my table-book, wondered to find a memorandum in it of something that I would have done after my death; upon which I told him the real truth, that though I was no more than a league from my house, and at that time in good health and spirits,

\* Lucret. lib. iii. ver. 928.

† Seneca, ep. 9.

yet when that thing came into my head, I made haste to write it down there, because I was not certain to live to get home. As I am a man that am continually brooding over my own thoughts, and keep them close to myself, I am prepared, at all hours, for what may happen, and the approach of death will be no novelty to me. We should always, as far as possible, be booted, and ready to depart; and be careful, above all things, to have no business to do then but our own;

*Quid brevi fortes jaculamur ævo*  
*Multa? \* i. e.*

Why cut'st thou out such mighty work, vain man,  
 Whose life's short date's compris'd in one short span?

For we shall find work enough to do there without any addition. One man complains the more of death, because it stops his career to a glorious victory; another, that he must be snatched away before he has married his daughter, or made a settlement on his young children; a third laments that he must part from his dear wife; a fourth, that he must leave his son: as if these were the chief comforts of life. For my part, I am at this instant, thanks be to God, in such a state, that I am ready to quit my being, whenever it shall please him, without any manner of regret. I am quite disengaged from the world; my leave is soon taken of all but myself. Never was any man prepared to bid adieu to the world, absolutely and purely, nor did any one ever quit his hold of it more universally than I hope to do. The dearest deaths are the best.†

\* Horace, ode 16, lib. ii. ver. 17, 18.

† Death is here considered as the introduction, and actual passage to a state of insensibility, which puts a period to our life. The more silently and rapidly we arrive to that state, the less ought the passage to terrify us. This comes up very near to the import of that bold and enigmatical expression of Montaigne, viz. "That the dearest deaths are the best."

—*Miser, O miser (aiunt) omnia ademit  
Una dies infesta mihi tot præmia vitæ.\* i. e.*

Wretch that I am (they cry) one fatal day  
So many joys of life has snatch'd away.

And the builder,

—*Manent (ait ille) opera interrupta, minæque  
Murorum ingentes, æquataque machina cælo.†*

Stupendous piles (says he) unfinish'd lie,  
And tow'rs, whose summits touch the vaulted sky.

A man must form no design that will take so much time to finish it, or that at least he will be so passionately desirous of seeing brought to a conclusion. We are born for action:

*Cum moriar, medium solvar et inter opus.‡ i. e.*

When death shall come, it me will find  
Employ'd in something I design'd.

I would always have a man to be doing, and spinning out the offices of life as far as possible; and that, though death should seize me planting my cabbages, I should not be concerned at it, and much less for leaving my garden unfinished. I know one who, on his death-bed, complained incessantly of his destiny for cutting off the thread of a chronicle he was then compiling, when he was advanced no farther than the fifteenth or sixteenth of our kings.

*Illud in his rebus non addunt, nec tibi eorum  
Jam desiderium rerum, superinsidet una.§ i. e.*

They tell us not, that dying we've no more  
The same desire of things as heretofore.

We are to divest ourselves of these vulgar and noxious humours. To this very purpose it was, said Lycurgus, that men appointed their burial-places nigh the churches, to accustom the common people, wo-

\* Lucret. lib. iii. ver. 911, 912. † Virg. Æneid. lib. iv. ver. 88, 89.

‡ Ovid. Amor. lib. ii. eleg. 10, ver. 36.

§ Lucret. lib. iii. ver. 913, 914.

men and children, so much to the view of the dead bodies, that they might not be startled, and to the end that the continual sight of bones, graves, and funerals, might put us in mind of our mortality :

*Quin etiam exhilarare viris convivia cæde  
Mos olim, et miscere epulis spectacula dira  
Certatum ferro, sæpe et super ipsa cadentum  
Pocula, respersis non parco sanguine mensis.\* i. e.*

'Twas therefore that the ancients, at their feasts,  
With tragic slaughter us'd to treat their guests ;  
Making their fencers, with their utmost spite,  
Skill, force, and fury, in their presence fight :  
'Till streams of blood o'erflow'd the spacious hall,  
Staining their tables, drinking-cups, and all.

As the Egyptians, after their feasts, presented their company with an image of death, which was brought in by one that cried out to them, Drink and be merry, for such wilt thou be when thou art dead ; so have I made it a practice, not only to have death in my imagination, but continually in my mouth ; and there is nothing of which I am so inquisitive as the manner of men's deaths, their dying words, looks, and deportment ; nor is there any passage in history that takes up so much of my attention ; and it is manifest, by many instances of this kind which I have mentioned, that I have a particular fancy for this subject. If I was a writer of books, I would compile a register of the various deaths of people, with notes, which would be of use for instructing men both to live and die. Dicearchus made one to which he gave that title, but it had another view, that was not so profitable.†

It will, perhaps, be objected by some, that the circumstances of dying so far exceed all manner of conception, that the best fencer will be quite off his guard when it comes to that push. Let them say what they will, premeditation is of great benefit ; and, besides, is it nothing to proceed so far at least with-  
That it is of advantage to think of death beforehand.

\* Sil. Ital. lib. xi. ver. 51, &c.

† Cic. Offic. lib. ii. cap. 5.



out any disturbance and tremor? but, moreover, nature itself assists us in the encounter. If the death be sudden and violent, we have no time for fear. I perceive that the longer a distemper holds me, I naturally contract a certain disgust of life. I find it much more difficult to digest this resolution of dying when I am in health, than when I am sick of a fever. The less I am attached to the comforts of life, by my beginning to lose the use and pleasure of them, the aspect of death becomes the less terrible to me; which gives me the hope, that the farther I remove from the former, and the nearer I approach to the latter, the more easily I shall compound for the exchange. I have experienced in many other occurrences, that, as Cæsar says, things often appear to us greater at a distance than near at hand; and have found, that when I was in health, I have held diseases in much greater horror than when I have felt them. The alacrity, pleasure, and vigour I now enjoy, represent the contrary estate to me in so great a disproportion to my present condition, that, in my imagination, I swell these inconveniences to twice their magnitude, thinking them more weighty than I find them to be in reality when I labour under them; and I hope to find the case the same with respect to death. Let us but observe, in the ordinary changes and declensions which we suffer, how nature steals from us the sight of our bodily decay. What remains to an old man of the vigour of his youth and maturer age?

*Heu ! senibus vitæ portio quanta manet ? \**

Alas ! how small a part of life's short stage  
Remains for travellers advanc'd in age !

A veteran soldier of Cæsar's guards, who was quite jaded and bowed down with age, coming to ask him leave that he might dispatch himself; Cæsar, observing his decrepitude, and his long beard that hung

\* Eleg. 6. Maximiani, cap. 6.

down to his breast, answered pleasantly, thou fanciest then that thou art still alive.\* Should a man fall into old age on a sudden, I do not think he would be capable of enduring such a change; but, being led by the hand of nature, as it were, by a gradual and insensible descent, it rolls us gently into that miserable state, and familiarises it to us, so that when youth dies in us, we feel no shock, though it is in fact a harder death than the total dissolution of a languishing life, and than the death of old age; forasmuch as the leap from an uneasy existence to a non-existence is not so disagreeable, as from a sprightly, florid state of existence, to one that is full of pain and anguish. The body, when bent, has less strength to sustain a burden; and the case is the same with the soul; it is absolutely necessary, therefore, that she should be raised up firm and erect against the power of this adversary. For as it is impossible she should be in tranquillity while in fear, so if, on the other hand, she be composed, she may boast (which is a thing almost above the state of mortals) that no uneasiness, torment, and terror, nor the least disgust can affect her happiness:

*Non vultus instantis tyranni*

*Mente quatit solida; neque Auster,*

*Dux inquieti turbidus Adriæ;*

*Nec fulminantis magna Jovis manus.*† i. e.

A soul well settled is not to be shook

With an incensed tyrant's threat'ning look,

It unconcern'd can hear the tempest roar,

And raging ocean lash the thund'ring shore.

Not the uplifted hand of mighty Jove,

Though charg'd with lightning, such a mind can move.

She is then become the mistress of her lusts and passions, the mistress of distress, shame, poverty, and all the other injuries of fortune; let us therefore, as many of us as can, gain this advantage, which is the true and sovereign liberty that enables us to defy

\* Senec. Epist. 77.

† Hor. lib. iii. ode 3.

violence and injustice, and to despise prisons and chains ;

— *In manicis et*

*Compeditibus scavo te sub custode tenebo.*

*Ipse Deus, simulatque volam, me solvet. Opinor,  
Hoc sentit : moriar, Mors ultima linea rerum est.\**

With bolts and chains I'll load thy feet and hands,  
Doom'd to obey a gaoler's stern commands.

Know, I the tyrant's utmost rage despise :

Propitious God will listen to my cries ;

By death will free me, when with woes oppress'd ;

And crown my sufferings with eternal rest.

Arguments  
against the  
fear of  
death.

Our religion itself has no surer human foundation than the contempt of life. Not only reason prompts us to it ; for why should we fear to lose a thing, which, being lost, cannot be regretted ? besides, since we are threatened with death of so many various kinds, is it not worse to fear them all, than to suffer one of them ? And what matters it when it happens, since it is unavoidable ? “ Socrates being told, that the thirty tyrants had condemned him “ to die ; ” † “ And so has nature them,” said he. What a folly is it for us to afflict ourselves about a passage that exempts us from all trouble ! As our birth brought us the birth of all things, so when we die all things to us will be dead. Therefore, to lament that we shall not be alive a hundred years hence, is as absurd as to be sorry that we were not in the land of the living a hundred years ago. Death is the beginning of another life. So did we weep, and so much it cost us to enter into this, and so did we put off our former veil, when we entered into the present state. Nothing can be a grievance that is but for once ; and is it reasonable to be so long in fear of a thing that is of so short a duration ? A long life, and a short, are by death made all one ; for there is no difference in things that are no more.

\* Hor. lib. i. ep. 16, ver. 76, &c.

† Socrates was not condemned to death by the thirty tyrants, but by the Athenians. Diogenes Laertius, lib. ii. segm. 35.

Aristotle relates,\* that there are certain little beasts on the banks of the river Hypanis, which live but one day, and that those of them which die at eight o'clock in the morning, die in their prime, and those that die at sunset are in the age of decrepitude. Who of us would not be indifferent whether happiness or misery were the lot of a momentary existence? Ours, be it more or less, if compared to eternity, or even to the duration of mountains, rivers, stars, trees, and even of some animals, is no less ridiculous.

Nay, nature itself forces us to our dissolution; "Go out of this world," says she, "as you came into it." By the same passage that you came from death to life, without passion or fear, go back from life to death. Your death is a part of the constitution of the universe; it is a part of the life of the world:

Death is a part of the constitution of the universe.

— *Inter se mortales mutua vivunt,*

*Et quasi cursores vitæ lampada tradunt.*

Among themselves mankind alternate live,  
And life's bright torch to the next runner give.†

"Shall I alter this excellent system of things for you?  
"It is the condition of your creation; death is a part  
"of you, and whilst you endeavour to escape it, you  
"fly from yourselves. This very being of yours that  
"you now enjoy, is equally shared betwixt life and  
"death. / The day of your birth is one day's advance  
"to death as well as life:

*Prima, quæ vitam dedit, hora carpsit, §  
Nascentes morimur, fatisque ab origine pendet. ||*

The hour that first gave life its breath,  
Was a whole hour's advance to death.  
As we are born we die; and our life's end  
Upon our life's beginning does depend,

\* Cicero Tuscul. Quæst. lib. i. cap. 39.

† Lucret. lib. ii. ver. 75, 78.

‡ This is an allusion to the Athenian games, wherein those that ran a race carried torches in their hands; which, when the race was over, they delivered into the hands of those that were to run next.

§ Senec. Hercul. chor. 3, ver 45.

|| Manil. lib. iv. ver. 16.

“ Every day you live you steal from life, and live  
 “ at the expense of life itself. The perpetual work  
 “ of your life is to build up death. You are in death  
 “ while you live, because, when your life is ended  
 “ you succeed to death ; or, if you had rather have  
 “ it so, you are dead after life, but dying all the time  
 “ you live, and death handles the dying much more  
 “ roughly, sharply, and more feelingly than the dead.  
 “ If you have made your advantage of life, you have  
 “ had enough of it, go away satisfied :

*Cur non ut plenus vitæ conviva recedis ? \**

Why dost thou not retire, like to a guest,  
 Sated with life, as he is with a feast ?

“ If you have not known how to make the best use  
 “ of it, and if it was unprofitable to you, why should  
 “ you be loth to part with it ? To what end would  
 “ you desire longer to keep it ?

— *Cur amplius addere quæris*

*Rursum quod pereat male et ingratum occidat omne. †*

And why, fond mortal, dost thou ask for more ?  
 Why still desire t' increase thy wretched store,  
 And wish for what must waste like those before ?

“ Life, in itself, is neither a good nor an evil ; but it  
 “ is the scene of good or evil, as you make it ; and  
 “ if you have lived a day you have seen all ; one day  
 “ is like all others. There is no other light, no other  
 “ sight ; this very sun, this moon, these very stars,  
 “ the present system of things is the very same that  
 “ your ancestors enjoyed, and the same that will en-  
 “ tertain your latest posterity :

*Non alium videre patres, aliumve nepotes  
 Aspicient. ‡*

Your grandsires saw no other things of old,  
 Nor shall your grandsons other things behold.

“ And come the worst that can come, the distribu-  
 “ tion and variety of all the acts of my comedy are

\* Lucret. lib. iii. ver. 951.

† Ibid. lib. iii. ver. 954, 955.

‡ Manilius, lib. i. ver. 521, 522.

“ performed in a year. If you have attended to the  
 “ succession of my four seasons, they comprehend  
 “ the infancy, youth, virility, and old age of the  
 “ world. The year has played its part, and has no  
 “ new scene, but will always be a repetition of the  
 “ same thing :

*Versamur ibidem, atque insumus usque.\* i. e.*

We yearly tread but one perpetual round,  
 We ne'er strike out, but beat the former ground.

*Atque in se sua per vestigia volvitur annus.† i. e.*

And the year rolls within itself again.

“ I am not determined,” continues Nature, “ to con-  
 “ tinue any new recreations for you :

*Nam tibi præterea quod machiner, inveniamque  
 Quod placeat nihil est ; eadem sunt omnia semper.‡ i. e.*

More pleasure than are made I cannot frame,  
 For to all times all things will be the same.

“ Make room for others, as others have done for you.  
 “ Equality is the soul of equity.§ Who can com-  
 “ plain of being under the same destiny with all his  
 “ fellow-creatures ? Besides, live as long as you can,  
 “ you will thereby not at all shorten the space of  
 “ time that you are to lie dead in the grave ; it is all  
 “ to no purpose : you will be every whit as long in  
 “ that situation which you so much dread, as if you  
 “ had died at the breast :

——— *Licet quot vis vivendo vincere secla,  
 Mors æterna tamen, nihilominus illa manebit.|| i. e.*

For though thy life should numerous ages fill,  
 The state of death will be eternal still.

“ And yet I will place you in such a condition as you  
 “ shall not be dissatisfied with :

*In vera nescis nullum fore morte alium te  
 Qui possit vivus tibi te lugere peremptum.  
 Stansque jacentem.¶ i. e.*

\* Lucret. lib. iii. ver. 1093.

† Virg. Geo. lib. ii. ver. 402.

‡ Lucret. lib. iii. ver. 957, 958.

§ Senec. epist. 30.

|| Lucret. lib. iii. ver. 1103, 1104.

¶ Ibid. ver. 898.

When dead, a living self thou canst not have,  
Or to lament or trample on thy grave.

“ Nor shall you so much as wish for the life you are  
“ so much concerned for :

*Nec sibi enim quisquam tum se vitamque requirit,*

*Nec desiderium nostri nos afficit ullum.\* i. e.*

Life, not ourselves we wish in that estate,  
Nor once about ourselves deliberate.

“ Death is less to be feared than nothing, if there  
“ was any thing less than nothing :

—*Multo mortem minus ad nos esse putandum,  
Si minus esse potest quam quod nihil esse videmus.† i. e.*

If less than nothing all the world can show,  
Death would appear to us, and would be so,

“ Neither can it any way concern you, whether living  
“ or dead : Not living, because you still exist ; nor  
“ dead, because you are no more. Moreover, no  
“ one dies before his hour ; and the time you leave  
“ behind was no more yours, than that which was  
“ past and gone before you was born ; nor does it  
“ any more concern you :

*Respice enim quam nil ad nos anteacta vetustas  
Temporis æterni fuerit.‡ i. e.*

Look back, and though times past eternal were,  
In those before us yet we had no share.

“ Let your life end where, or when it will, it is all  
“ included in eternity. The benefit of life consists  
“ not in the space, but the use of it. Such a one  
“ may have lived a long time, who yet may be said  
“ to have enjoyed but a short life. Give attention  
“ to time while it is present with you. It depends  
“ upon your will, and not upon the number of years,  
“ that you have lived long enough. Do you think  
“ never to arrive at the place towards which you are  
“ continually going ? And yet there is no road but

\* Lucret. ver. 932, 935.    † Id. *ibid.*    ‡ Id. ver. 985, 986,

“ hath its end. And if company will make it more  
 “ pleasant, does not all the world go the self-same  
 “ way as you do ?

— *Omnia te vita perfuncta sequentur.\** i. e.

All the world in death must follow thee.

“ Does not all the world dance the same brawl that  
 “ you do ? Is there any thing that does not grow old  
 “ as well as you ? A thousand men, a thousand ani-  
 “ mals, and a thousand other creatures die at the  
 “ same instant that you expire :

*Nam nox nulla diem, neque noctem aurora secuta est,  
 Quæ non audierit mistos vagitibus ægris  
 Ploratus, mortis comites, et funeris atri.†*

No night succeeds the day, nor morning's light  
 Succeeds to drive away the shades of night,  
 Wherein there are not heard the dismal groans  
 Of dying men mix'd with the woful moans  
 Of living friends, as also with the cries,  
 And dirges fitting funeral obsequies.

“ To what end do you endeavour to avoid death,  
 “ unless it was possible for you to evade it ? You  
 “ have seen instances enough of those to whom it  
 “ has been welcome, as it has put an end to their  
 “ great misery. Have you talked with any to whom  
 “ it has therefore been unwelcome ? It is very foolish  
 “ to condemn a thing which you have not experi-  
 “ enced, neither yourself, nor in the person of any  
 “ other. Why (says Nature) dost thou complain of  
 “ me and destiny ? Do we wrong thee ? Is it for thee  
 “ to govern us, or for us to dispose of thee ? Though  
 “ thy age may not be accomplished, yet thy life is.  
 “ A little man is as entirely a man as a giant ; neither  
 “ men nor their lives are measured by the yard.  
 “ Chiron refused to be immortal, when he was ac-  
 “ quainted with the terms upon which he was to en-  
 “ joy it, by his father Saturn, the very god of time,  
 “ and its duration. Do but seriously consider, how

Immortal-  
 ty refused  
 by Chiron,  
 and why.

\* Lucr. et. lib. iii. ver. 981.

† Ibid. lib. ii. ver. 579, 580.



“ much more intolerable and painful a life would be,  
 “ which was to last for ever, than that which I have  
 “ given thee. If death was not to be your lot, you  
 “ would eternally curse me for having deprived you  
 “ of it. I have, it is true, mixed a little bitterness  
 “ with it, to the end, that when you have perceived  
 “ the conveniency of it, you might not embrace it  
 “ too greedily and indiscreetly : and that you might  
 “ be established in this moderation which I require  
 “ of you, neither to fly from life nor death, I have  
 “ tempered both with bitter and sweet. I taught  
 “ Thales, the chief of all your sages, that either life  
 “ or death was indifferent ; so that, when one asked  
 “ him, ‘ Why then did he not die ? ’ he answered  
 “ very wisely, ‘ because it was a matter of indif-  
 “ ference.’ Water, earth, air, and fire, and the other  
 “ members of this my structure, are no more the in-  
 “ struments of thy life than of thy death.\* Why art  
 “ thou afraid of thy last day, which conduces no  
 “ more to thy dissolution than any before it. The  
 “ last step is not the cause of lassitude, but only the  
 “ discovery of it. Every day travels towards death,  
 “ thy last only arrives at it.” Thus far the good  
 lessons of our mother Nature.

Why death  
 appears to  
 us less  
 dreadful in  
 the field of  
 battle than  
 in our own  
 houses.

I have often considered with myself whence it  
 should proceed, that, in the field of battle, the image  
 of death, whether we view it in our own danger of  
 it, or in that of others, is not near so dreadful as in  
 our own houses, (which if it were not fact, they would  
 be a pack of whining milk-sops) and that though  
 death has always the same aspect, yet it meets with  
 more courage in peasants, and men of low rank,  
 than in others. I really believe, that the dismal air  
 and apparatus with which we set it out, terrifies us  
 more than the thing itself. A new manner of life  
 quite contrary to the former ; the cries of mothers,  
 wives, and children ; the visits of astonished, afflict-  
 ed friends ; the attendance of pale and blubbering

\* Seneca, *epist.* 120.

servants; a dark room, with burning wax tapers in it; our beds surrounded with physicans and parsons; in short, nothing but ghastliness and horror about us, make men fancy themselves already dead and buried.\* “Children are afraid of their very friends when they see them masqued, and so are we ourselves. The vizer must be taken off as well from things as persons.” When that is removed, we shall find nothing underneath but the very same death which a footman or a chambermaid suffered the other day without any fear. Happy therefore is that death which does not give time to make such a pompous apparatus.

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## CHAPTER XX.

### *Of the Power of Imagination.*

**F**ORTIS *imaginatio generat casum*; a strong imagination begets accidents, says the schoolmen. I am one of those who are sensible of the very great power of imagination. Every one is jostled, and some are overthrown by it. Its impression pierces me, and for want of strength to resist it, I have no recourse to art to escape it. The company of those that are healthy and cheerful is all that I wish for. The very sight of another person's anguish gives me sensible uneasiness, and I often sympathise with a third person. A perpetual cough in another, tickles my lungs and throat. I more unwillingly visit the sick, to whom I am in duty bound, than those for whom I have less concern and regard. I contract the disease which engrosses my attention; nor do I at all wonder that fancy should occasion fevers, and sometimes death, to those who give way to its extravagancies. Simon Thomas was a great physician

Of the effects of imagination.

\* Seneca, epist. 24.

of his time: I remember, that meeting me one day at Thoulouse, at the house of a rich old man, who was troubled with bad lungs, and consulting him about the cure, he told his patient, that one thing would conduce to it, namely, to give me some cause to be fond of his company; and that by fixing his eyes on the freshness of my complexion, and his imagination upon the abundant sprightliness and vigour of my youth, and possessing all his senses with that florid state of body which I then enjoyed, his constitution might be the better for it; but he forgot to say that I might happen to be the worse for it. Gallus Vibius so long cudgelled his brains\* to find out the essence of madness, that his judgment became affected. Some there are, who, through fear, save the hangman a labour; and there was a man, whose eyes being unbound to have his pardon read to him, was found dead upon the scaffold, through the mere force of his imagination. We start, tremble, turn pale, and blush by the shocks of our imagination; and when covered over head and ears in bed, feel our bodies agitated with its power to such a degree, that some have thereby expired. So warm is the imagination of youth, even when fast asleep, as to satisfy their amorous desires in a dream; which Lucretius expresses a little too nakedly in the following distich, viz.

*Ut quasi transactis sæpe omnibus rebus, profundant  
Fluminis ingentes fluctus vestemque cruentent.\* i. e.*

Who love enjoys in sleep, his inflam'd mind  
Lays his love's tribute where 'twas not design'd.

\* Seneca, the rhetorician, from whom Montaigne must have taken this story, does not say that Gallus Vibius lost his reason by endeavouring to comprehend the essence of madness, but by too studious an application to imitate its motions. As this Gallus was a rhetorician by profession, he imagined that the transports of madness represented livelily in dialogue, would charm his audience, and took so much pains to play the madman in jest, that he became so in earnest. He is the only man I ever knew, says Seneca, that became mad, not by accident, but by an act of judgment. Controvers. 9, lib. ii.

† Lucret. lib. ix. ver. 1029, 1030.

Although it be no new thing to see horns grafted in the morning on the head of a person that had none when he went to bed, yet memorable is what befel Cyppus, a noble Roman, who, having one day been with great delight a spectator of a bull-fight, and having all night long dreamed that he had horns on his head, his forehead produced them in reality next morning by the force of imagination.\* It was downright passion that made Croesus's son speak, who was born dumb.† Antiochus caught a fever by being too deeply impressed with the beauty of Stratonice. Pliny says, in his Natural History, lib. vii. cap. 4, that he saw Lucius Crossicius, who from a woman was turned into a man upon her very wedding day. Pontanus and others relate the like metamorphoses that have happened in these latter ages in Italy. And through the vehement desire of him and his mother,

The story  
of the god-  
dess Lyra,  
in Lucian.

*Vota puer solvit, quæ sæmina voverat, Iphis.‡ i. e.*

Iphis, a boy, the vow defray'd  
That he had promis'd when a maid.

I myself, as I passed through Vitry le François, a town in Champagne, saw a man, whom the bishop of Soissons confirmed by the name of German, whom all the inhabitants of the place had known and seen to be a girl by the name of Mary to the age of twenty-two. When I saw him he had a very bushy beard, was old, and not married. He told us, that by straining himself in a leap, his virile member came out; and the young women of the place have a song to this day, wherein they caution one another not to

\* Pliny puts this story in the same class as that of Actæon, and supposes both to be fabulous. Nat. Hist. lib. xi. cap. 45. Valerius Maximus gives this Cyppus the title of prætor, and says, that as he departed from Rome, in the habit of a general, and the accident which Montaigne speaks of here happening to him, the diviners declared, that Cyppus would be a king if he returned to Rome; whereupon he voluntarily condemned himself to perpetual exile, in order to prevent it. Valer. Max. lib. v. cap. 6.

† Herodotus, lib. i. pag. 39.

‡ Ovid. Metam. lib. ix. fab. 12, ver. 129.

take too large strides, for fear of being turned into men, as Mary German was. It is no such wonder if this should often happen; for if imagination has any power in such things, it is so continually, and so vigorously attached to this subject, that, to the end it may not so often relapse into the same thought and eagerness of desire, it were better to incorporate this virile part into the girls\* once for all.

The strange effects of imagination.

Some attribute the scars of king Dagobert and St. Francis to the force of imagination. It is said, that bodies are sometimes removed by it out of their places. Celsus tells us of a priest, whose soul was in such an ecstatic rapture, that the body remained for a long time without sense and respiration. St. Austin mentions another, who, if he did but hear any lamentable or doleful cries, would fall suddenly into a swoon, and so profound a lethargy, that it was to no purpose to bawl in his ears, shake, pinch, or scorch him, till he came to himself; then he said, he had heard voices, as it were afar off, and felt when they scorched and pinched him: and that this was not a dissembled obstinacy in defiance of his sense of feeling, was plain, because he had all the while neither pulse nor breathing.

Why such credit is given to visions, enchantments, &c.

It is very probable, that the credit of visions, enchantments, and such extraordinary effects, is principally derived from the power of imagination, which makes the greatest impression upon the more credulous minds of the vulgar, who are very apt to believe they see what they do not.

From whence proceeds the hindrance of erection.

I am also in some doubt whether those pleasant ligatures with which this age of ours is so hampered, that scarce any thing else is talked of, are not the voluntary impressions of apprehension and fear. For I know by experience, that a certain man, whom I can answer for as well as for myself, and one who

\* A false and extravagant thought this. I am not at all surprised that Montaigne came to be possessed with it, for who does not dream sometimes when he is awake; but what I wonder at is, how he could determine to make use of it.

can by no means be suspected of impotency, and as little of being under a spell, who having heard a companion of his tell a story of an extraordinary disability that seized him at a very unseasonable time, being afterwards in the like engagement, the horror of the relation so roughly shocked his imagination all on a sudden, that he met with the same fate as the other had done; and for that time forward was subject to relapse into it, the remembrance of his disaster curbing and tyrannising over him. He found some remedy however for this idle fancy by another, namely, by his own frank confession, and previous declaration of his infirmity to the party with whom he was to do, whereby the contention of his soul was in some sort appeased; because knowing that now nothing better was expected from him, his obligation was the less, and he suffered the less by it, when he was free at his choice (his thought being disentangled and at liberty, and his body in its proper state) he caused the part to be handled, and was perfectly cured. After a man has once given proof of his capacity, he is never after in danger of non-performance, unless upon the account of real weakness. Neither is this disaster to be feared, but in adventures where the soul is extended beyond measure with desire and respect, and especially where opportunities call out that are urgent and unforeseen. There is no way of recovery from this trouble; and yet I have known some who have found their account by coming, after being half-sated elsewhere, purposely to cool the heat of their fury; and some who through age find themselves impotent by being less able. And I knew another who was made easy, by being assured that a friend of his had a counter-battery of certain charms to preserve him. The story is worth telling.

A count of a great family, with whom I was very intimate, being married to a fair lady, who had been courted by one of the guests at her wedding; all his friends, especially an old lady, his kinswoman, who

A pleasant  
remedy for  
curing an  
evil in the  
imagina-  
tion.

had the direction of the marriage-feast, and at whose house it was kept, were in great fear that there would be some sorcery in the case, and she communicated her apprehension to me. I desired her to rely upon my care. I had, by chance, in my possession a small plate of gold, whereon was engraved some of the celestial signs, which was good to prevent the brain-pan from being scorched by the heat of the sun, and to remove the head-ach, if it was applied exactly to the suture of the skull; and in order to keep it firm, a ribbon was tacked to it, so as to be tied under the chin; a piece of quackery, cousin-german to what we are now speaking of. I had this singular present from James Pellatier, who lived with me, and having a mind to make an experiment with it, I told the count that he might possibly have the same trick put upon him as had been played with some other bridegrooms, some persons being in the house who certainly intended to do him such an ill office; but I advised him to go boldly to bed, when I would do him the office of a friend; and, if need required, would not spare to work a miracle that was in my power, provided he would assure me upon his honour to keep it an entire secret. All that he had to do was in the night, when they came to bring him his caudle, if matters had not gone well with him, to give me a sign. His ears had been so dinned, and his mind so prepossessed, that he found his imagination really disturbed, and therefore, at the time agreed on, he gave me the sign. I then whispered him, that he should get out of bed, under pretence of putting us out of the chamber, and that taking off my night-gown, as it were in a frolic (we being much of a size), should put it on himself, and keep it on till he had done what I ordered him; which was, that when we were gone out of the room, he should retire to make water; repeat certain words three times, and make certain motions; that at each time he should tie the ribband I put into his hands about his waist, and place the medal that was ap-

pendant to it (the figures in such a position) very carefully upon his kidneys; which being done, and having, at the last of the three times, so well fastened the ribband, that it could neither unloose, nor slip from its place, he might securely renew his attack, not forgetting to spread my night-gown on his bed in such a manner that it might cover them both. In these tricks the effect chiefly consists, our fancy being seduced to think that such strange formalities must proceed from some occult science. Their insignificance really gives them weight and reverence. Upon the whole, it was certain that my characters were more venerean than solar, and consisted more in action than prohibition. It was indeed a sudden whim, mixed with a little curiosity, that prompted me to do a thing to which I have by nature an aversion; for I am an enemy to all subtle and sham performances, and wash my hands of all finesse, whether it be for pleasure or profit; for if the action be not vicious, the manner of it is. Amasis, king of Egypt, married Laodicea, a very beautiful Greek virgin; and though he was a man of approved gallantry to all others, yet he could by no means enjoy her, so that he threatened to kill her, on a suspicion that she was a witch. As it is usual with fancy, it put him upon devotion, and having made his vows and promises to Venus,\* he found his strength divinely repaired the very first night after his oblations and sacrifices. Now, in plain truth, women are to blame for putting on those disdainful, coy, and angry countenances, which extinguishes the vigour of the men, as it kindles their desire. It was a saying of the daughter-in-law of Pythagoras,† that “the woman who goes to bed with a man, must put off her modesty with her petticoat, and with the same put it

\* Herodotus, lib. ii. p. 180, says, that it was not Amasis, but Laodicea, or Ladice, who faithfully performed a vow she had made to Venus, by erecting a statue to her, which, said he, was still standing in my time.

† Diog. Laert. in the Life of Pythagoras, lib. viii. segm. 49.



"on again."\* The assailant being disturbed in mind with a variety of alarms is easily dispirited; and whoever has been once thus mortified by the mere force of imagination (a mortification which it never gives but at the first congress, because that is the most ardent and eager, and because also, at this first trial, a man is most timorous of miscarrying), whoever, I say, has made a bad beginning, he becomes angry and peevish at the accident, which will be apt to stick to him upon future occasions.

How married men ought to behave in the nuptial bed.

As for married men, whose time is all their own, they ought neither to be too hasty, nor so much as to attempt the feat, if they are not prepared. And it were better to fail in the decorum of handselling the nuptial sheets, when a man is full of agitation and trembling, and to wait another opportunity, at a more private and tranquil juncture, than to make himself perpetually miserable, by being confounded and enraged for being baffled at the first attack. Till possession be taken, a man, subject to this infirmity, should leisurely, and by degrees, make several slight trials and offers, without provoking himself, and striving against the grain, in order to be fully convinced in his own mind of his ability. Such as know their members to be naturally obedient to their desires, need only be careful to counterplot their fancy.

If one member is disobedient, others are the same.

The indocile liberty of this member is sufficiently remarkable, by its importunate demand when we have nothing for it to do, and by so imperiously disputing the authority with our will, and with so much pride and obstinacy denying all solicitations both manual and mental. And yet though its rebellion is so insolent as to give sufficient proof to condemn it, if I were feed to plead its cause, I should perhaps bring

\* Montaigne here mentions Theano, the famous Pythagorean woman, who was the wife, and not the daughter-in-law of Pythagoras. See Diogenes Laertius in the Life of Pythagoras, lib. viii. segm. 42. It is M. Menage who has taken notice of this small mistake of Montaigne. Diogenes Laertius, tom. xxxv. p. 500, col. 2.

its fellow-members into a suspicion of contriving this mischief against it underhand, out of pure envy at the importance and ravishing delight peculiar to its employment, and of arming mankind against it by malevolently charging it alone with their common offence. For I leave it to be considered, whether there is any one part of our bodies which does not often refuse to operate as we would have it, and often exercise its function in opposition to the will. They have every one of them proper passions of their own that awake or stupify them without our leave. How often do the involuntary motions of the countenance discover our secret thoughts, and betray us to bystanders? The same cause that animates this member, does also, without our perceiving it, animate the heart, lungs, and pulse, the very sight of an agreeable object imperceptibly inflaming us with a feverish disorder. Is it those veins and muscles only that swell and flag without the approbation, not only of our will, but of our opinion? We do not command our hairs to stand on end, nor our flesh to tremble, with desire or fear. The hand often conveys itself to parts which we do not direct it. The tongue falters, and the voice is sometimes interrupted when we cannot help it. When we have nothing to eat, and would willingly allay the appetite both of eating and drinking, it nevertheless provokes the parts that are susceptible of it, and abandons us in like manner, and as unseasonably, as the other appetite of which we have been speaking. The vessels that serve to discharge the belly have their proper dilatations and compressions without and beyond our direction, as well as those which are destined for evacuating the reins. And that which, for justifying the prerogative of our will, is urged by St. Augustin, viz. That he had seen a man who\* could command his back-

\* Some, without any shame, utter such a variety of sounds from their fundaments at their will, as if they seemed to sing from that part. Aug. de Civit. Dei. lib. xiv. cap. 24. To which Vives adds, by way of commentary, ' Such was, in our time, a certain German in

side to discharge as many f—ts as he pleased, and which Vives illustrated by another example in his time, of one that could let them off in tune, does not suppose that part to be any more obedient than the others; for is any thing commonly more noisy or indiscreet? To which let me add, that I myself knew one so turbulent and refractory that way, that for forty years together made his master-vent with one continued explosion without intermission. I could heartily wish, that I only knew by reading, how oft a man's belly, by the smothering of one single f—t has brought him to the very door of a tormenting death; and that the emperor,\* who gave liberty to f—t any where, had at the same time given us the power of doing it. But as to our will, for the sake of whose prerogatives we prefer this accusation, with how much greater probability might we not reproach it with rebellion and sedition, by its irregularity and disobedience? Does it always operate as we would have it? Does it not often will what we forbid it to will, and to our manifest damage? Does it suffer itself, more than any of the other faculties, to be directed by the results of our reason? To conclude, I should move, in the behalf of the gentleman, my client, that it might be considered, that though in this circumstance his cause is inseparably and indistinctly conjoined with an accomplice, yet he only is called in question, and that by arguments and accusations that cannot be charged upon his said accomplice, who sometimes invites at a wrong season, and never refuses, and who allures tacitly and clandestinely. Therefore is the malice and injustice of his accusers manifestly apparent. But be that as it will, let the advocates and judges pass sentence as they please, nature will have its course, and she

\* the retinue of Maximilian the emperor, and his son Philip; nor was there any tune which he could not imitate with his immodest f—ts.

\* Claudius, the fifth Roman emperor. But Suetonius only relates, that it was said the emperor Claudius had a design to authorise this freedom any where, even at feasts. See the Life of Claudius, cap. 32.

would have done no more than justice, if she had endowed this member with some special privilege, as the author of the only immortal work of mortals; the divine work, according to Socrates, and love, the desire of immortality, and the immortal dæmon himself.

Some one, perhaps, by such an effect of imagination, leaves the king's evil behind him, which his companion carries back into Spain. This is the reason why in such cases it is usual to require the mind to be prepared for the thing which is to be undertaken. Why do the physicians practise beforehand upon the credulity of their patient with so many false promises of his cure, unless it were that the force of imagination might be a salvo for the imposture of their apozems? They know that a great master of their faculty has left it under his hand, that there are some men on whom the very sight of a medicine has operated. What has put this whimsical conceit into my head, is the remembrance of a story that was told me by a domestic of my late father's apothecary, an honest Swiss, whose countrymen are not given to vanity nor lying, viz. That he had known a merchant at Thoulouse, who, being a valetudinarian, and afflicted with the stone, had frequent occasion to take clysters, of which he caused several sorts to be prescribed to him by the physicians, according to the accidents of the disease, and they being brought to him with all the usual forms, he often felt with his finger whether they were not too hot. Being laid down on his bed, the syringe put up, and all the apparatus performed, except injection, the apothecary being retired, and the patient treated in all respects as if he had received a clyster, he found the same effect that those do to whom it has been actually administered. If at any time the physician did not think the operation sufficient, he gave him two or three more after the same manner. The Swiss moreover swore to me, that, to save charges (for he paid as if

Confidence  
in the phy-  
sician con-  
tributes to  
the cure of  
the patient.

he had really taken the clysters) the patient's wife having sometimes made trial of warm water only, the effect discovered the cheat, and finding these would do no good, he was fain to return to the old way.

A distemper contracted by mere power of imagination.

A woman fancying she had swallowed a pin in a piece of bread, cried out, sadly complaining of an intolerable pain in her throat, where she thought she felt it stick. But an ingenious fellow who was brought to her, finding no outward tumour, nor alteration, and guessing that it was only a conceit she had taken at some crust of bread that had pricked her as it went down, gave her a vomit, and probably dropped a crooked pin into the bason, which the woman imagining she had voided, presently found herself eased of her pain. I myself knew a gentleman, who having made an entertainment at his own house for some company, gave out, three or four days after it, by way of jest only (for there was no such thing) that he had made them eat a baked cat; at which a young lady that was one of the guests took such an abominable disgust, that she was seized with a violent sickness at her stomach, and a fever, to such a degree, that there was no possibility of saving her.

The brute animals are subject to the power of imagination. The effects of it upon the body of another.

That other animals are subject to the power of imagination as well as man, has been seen in some dogs, which have died of grief for the loss of their masters. We observe them also to bark and tremble in their sleep, as horses will neigh and kick in theirs. But all this may be ascribed to the close connection betwixt the body and soul, mutually imparting what they feel to each other.

On the other hand, the imagination operates sometimes, not upon its own body only, but upon the body of another, just in the same manner as an injected body communicates its distemper to its neighbour, as we perceive in the plague, small-pox, and sore eyes, which are conveyed from one body to another:

*Dum spectant oculos læsos, læduntur & ipsi :  
Multaque corporibus transitione nocent.\* i. e.*

Viewing sore eyes, eyes to be sore are brought,  
And many ills are by transition caught.

So the imagination, being vehemently agitated, emits ideas capable of hurting another object. We read in ancient history, of certain women in Scythia, who, being animated and enraged against any one, killed them only with their looks. Turtles and ostriches hatch their eggs with only looking at them ; which shows that their eyes have a certain power to dart. And the eyes of sorcerers are said to be malignant and hurtful:

*Nescio quis teneros oculus mihi fascinat agnos.† i. e.*

What eye it is I do not know,  
My tender lambs bewitches so.

Magicians are but bad vouchers for me ; yet we find by experience, that women imprint the marks of their fancy on the infants they bear in their wombs. The imagination of women with child. Witness her that was brought to bed of a negro, and the girl that was brought from the neighbourhood of Pisa, and presented to Charles, king of Bohemia, and emperor, all over rough and hairy, whom her mother is said to have conceived when she was looking at an image of St. John the Baptist, that hung by her bed-side.

It is the same with animals ; witness Jacob's sheep, and the partridges and hares, which turn out white upon the snowy mountains. The power of imagination in animals. There was at my house, a little while ago, a cat watching a bird that was at the top of a tree, and after having fixed their eyes stedfastly upon one another for some time, the bird dropped down dead, as it were, into the cat's claws ; either being intoxicated by its own imagination, or allured by some attractive power in puss. They who are fond of hawking, must no doubt have heard the story of the falconer, who, having steadily fixed

\* Ovid. de Remedio Amoris, lib. ii. ver. 320.

† Virgil. Eclogue iii. ver. 183.

his eye upon a kite in the air, laid a wager that he would bring her down by the mere power of his sight ; and it was said he did so. As for the tales I borrow, I charge them upon the consciences of those from whom I have them. The arguments are my own, and founded upon the proof of reason, not of experience, to which every one is at the liberty of adding his own examples : and he that has none to offer, let him believe, nevertheless, that here are enough, considering the number and variety of accidents. If I have not made a just application of them, let any body else make a better. Also in the subjects whereon I treat of our manners and motives, the testimonies which I produce, how fabulous soever, provided they are not impossible, serve as well as the true ones. Whether they happened or not, at Rome or at Paris, to John or to Peter, it is still a turn of the human capacity, of which I have made good use by this recital. I see it, and benefit by it, as much in the shadow as in the substance ; and of the various passages I meet with in history, I select that for my purpose which is the most rare and remarkable. There are some authors, whose aim it is to give an account of things that have really happened ; mine, if I can attain to it, should be to represent what may possibly happen. There is a just liberty allowed in the schools, of supposing similes when they have none at hand. I do not, however, make any use of that liberty ; and as to that affair in superstitious religion, I surpass all historical authority, in the instances which I here mention of what I have heard, read, done, or said. I have laid myself under a prohibition to presume to alter the slightest and most trifling circumstances. My conscience does not falsify one tittle ; what my ignorance may do, I cannot say.

Whether it  
is consist-  
ent with a  
philoson-  
pher and a  
divine to  
write histo-  
ry.

This it is that makes me sometimes ponder with myself, whether it can be consistent with a divine and a philosopher, and men of such delicate consciences, and exquisite wisdom, to write history. How can they stake their credit on that of the pub-

lic? How can they be responsible for the opinions of men whom they do not know, and deliver their conjectures as canonical? Of actions performed before their own eyes, wherein several people were actors, they would be unwilling to give evidence before a judge, and they would not undertake to be absolute surety for the intentions of their most familiar acquaintance. For my part, I think there is less hazard in writing of things past, than present, forasmuch as the writer only relates matters upon the authority of others.

I am solicited to write the history of my own time by some people, who think I look upon its affairs with an eye less prejudiced than another, and that I have a clearer insight into them, by reason of the access which I have had; by my good fortune, to the leaders of the different factions; but they do not consider that, were I to gain the reputation of Salust, I would not take the pains, being such a sworn enemy, as I am, to all obligation, assiduity, and perseverance; besides, that there is nothing so inconsistent with my style, as an extended narration. I often cut myself short in it for want of breath. I am neither good at composition nor comment, and know no more than a child the phrases and idioms proper for expressing the most common things; therefore I have undertaken to treat of what I know how to express, and have accommodated my subject to my capacity. Should I take a guide, I might not be able to keep pace with him. Nor do they consider, that while I indulge such a freedom, I might deliver opinions, which, in my own judgment, and according to reason, would be illegal and punishable. Plutarch would be ready to tell us, that what he has wrote is the work of others; that his examples are all and every where strictly true; that they are useful to posterity; and are exhibited with such a lustre, as will light us in the way to virtue, which was his aim. Whether an old story be true or false, it is not of dangerous consequence.

Why Montaigne will not write the history of his own time.



## CHAPTER XXI.

*One Man's Profit is another's Loss.*

**DEMADES**, the Athenian, condemned a fellow-citizen, who furnished out funerals, for demanding too great a price for his goods? and if he got an estate, it must be by the death of a great many people: but I think it a sentence ill grounded, forasmuch as no profit can be made, but at the expense of some other person, and that every kind of gain is by that rule liable to be condemned. The tradesman thrives by the debauchery of youth, and the farmer by the dearness of corn; the architect by the ruin of buildings, the officers of justice by quarrels and law-suits; nay, even the honour and function of divines is owing to our mortality and vices. No physician takes pleasure in the health even of his best friends, said the ancient Greek comedian, nor soldier in the peace of his country; and so of the rest.\* And, what is yet worse, let every one but examine his own heart, and he will find, that his private wishes spring and grow up at the expense of some other person. Upon which consideration this thought came into my head, that nature does not hereby deviate from her general policy; for the naturalists hold, that the birth, nourishment, and increase of any one thing is the decay and corruption of another:

*Nam quodcunque suis mutatum finibus exit,  
Continuo hoc mors est illius, quod fuit ante.† i. e.*

For what from its own confines chang'd doth pass,  
Is straight the death of what before it was.

\* Seneca de Beneficiis, lib. vi. cap. 38, from whence most of this chapter is taken.

† Lucret. lib. iii. ver. 752, 753.

## CHAPTER XXII.

*Of Custom, and the Difficulty of changing a Law once received.*

IN my opinion, that person had a very right con-<sup>The force of custom.</sup>ception of the power of custom, who invented the fable of the country woman,\* who having played with, and carried in her arms, a calf from the very hour it was cast, and continuing to do so as it grew up, did, by that custom, gain so much strength, that though it lived to be a large ox, she still carried it. For, in truth, custom is a violent, and yet an insinuating school-mistress; she establishes her authority over us gradually, and by stealth; but having by such a gentle and humble beginning planted and fixed it, she immediately unmasks, and shows us a furious and tyrannic countenance, against which we hardly dare so much as to lift up our eyes. We see her at every turn breaking through the laws of nature; *usus efficacissimus rerum omnium magister*;† i. e. Custom is the greatest tyrant in nature. I give credit to the account of Plato's cave in his republic, and to the custom of the physicians, who so often resign the reasons of their art to its authority. I believe the story of that king, who, by custom, brought his stomach to that pass, as to take poison for its nourishment; and that of the young woman, who, Albert reports, was accustomed to live on poison; for in the late discovered world of the Indies, there were found great nations, and in very different climates, who lived upon them, collected and

\* It is become a kind of proverb, which Petronius has thus expressed,

—*Tollere taurum  
Quæ tulerit vitulum illa potest.*

You will also find it among the adages of Erasmus, Chil. 1. Cent. 2. Ad. 51.

† Pliny's Nat. Hist. lib. xxvi. cap. 2.

fed them for their tables, as they also did grasshoppers, mice, lizards, and bats; and, in dearth of provisions, a toad was sold for six crowns; all which they dress, and serve up with various sauces. There were others also found, to whom the flesh we eat, and our other provisions were deadly poison. *Consuetudinis magna vis est: pernoctant venatores in nive: in montibus uri se patiuntur: pugiles castibus contusi, ne ingemiscunt quidem;*\* i. e. Great is the power of custom. It makes huntsmen pass whole nights in the snow, and to suffer themselves in the day to be parched with heat on the mountains; and the prize-fighters, though beat almost to a jelly, not so much as to utter a single groan. These foreign instances will not be thought so strange, if we consider, what we know by common experience, how much custom dulls our senses. To be satisfied of this, we need not go to the Nile to be certified of what is reported of those who live near its cataracts; nor need we discredit what the philosophers think of the music of the spheres, that the bodies of those circles being solid and smooth, and happening to touch and rub one another in their motion, cannot fail to produce a wonderful harmony, by the quavers and changes whereof the revolutions and carols (i. e. dances) of the stars are modulated. We are to take it for granted, that the hearing faculty of all creatures here below being stupified, like that of the Egyptians, by the continuance of this sound, cannot perceive it, how great soever. Smiths, millers, armourers, and the like, could never be able to live in the noise of their trades, if it struck their ears with the same violence as it does ours. My perfumed band gratifies my own nostrils at first, but after I have worn it a little while, it is only smelt by those who come near me; but it is yet more strange that custom, notwithstanding the long intermissions and intervals, should yet have the power to unite and

\* Cic. Tusc. Quest. lib. ii. cap. 17.

establish the effect of its impressions upon our senses, as those experience who live near churches where there is ringing of bells. I lie at home in a turret, where every morning and evening a very great bell rings out the *Ave Maria*, the noise of which shakes the bed under me, and at first I thought it insupportable; but a little time made it so familiar to me, that I now hear it without offence, and often it does not awaken me.

Plato having reproved a boy for playing with nuts, the child said, 'You blame me for a trifle.' Plato replied, 'Custom is not such a trifle.\*' I observe, that our greatest vices are derived from the impression made on us in our most tender years, and that we are principally governed by our nurses. The mothers are delighted in seeing a child twist the neck of a chicken, and divert itself in hurting a puppy or a kitten. And there are such silly fathers in the world, as think it a happy presage of a warlike spirit, when they see their sons fall foul on an innocent peasant, or a lackey, that dares not hold up his hand in his defence. They think it shows a genius in a lad, when they see him outwitting his play-fellow by some unlucky trick or knavery; yet these are the true seeds and roots of cruelty, tyranny, and treachery. In these years they bud, and afterwards sprout up vigorously in the hands of custom; and it is a very dangerous error to excuse these vile inclinations by the tenderness of years, and the levity of the subject. In the first place, it is nature that speaks, the voice of which is then more pure and genuine, as it is younger and more shrill. Secondly, the deformity of cozenage does not depend on the difference betwixt crown pieces and pins, but merely upon itself; and I should think it more just to reason thus, Why would he not cheat for a crown, since

Vices take root in the most tender years, and ought therefore to be corrected instantly.

\* Diogenes Laertius, in the life of Plato, lib. iii. segm. 38; where he does not say that the person reproved by Plato was a child, and that he played with nuts; but he says, that he played with dice, which renders Plato's answer of much more importance.

he does so for a pin? than to argue as they do, who say, He only plays for pins; he would not cheat, if it was for money. Children should be carefully taught to abhor the vices of their own contriving, and the natural deformity of them ought to be so represented, that they may not only avoid them in their actions, but to hate them from their hearts; that the very thought of them may be odious to them; what mask soever they wear. I know very well, that for my own part, having been trained in my childhood to walk in a plain open path, and having then entertained an aversion to all manner of tricking and shuffling in my childish sports (as it must be noted, that the plays of children are not in jest, but must be judged of as their most serious actions); there is no pastime, how trifling soever, wherein I partake, in which I do not abhor deceit, from my natural inclination, and without study. I shuffle and cut the cards, and keep as strict an account for a livre, as if it were for a double pistole; and when I play in good earnest for a round sum, it is with the same indifference, whether I win or lose, as when I play against my wife or daughter. At all times, and in all places, my own eyes are a sufficient watch upon my actions. I am not so narrowly observed by any others, nor are there any that I am more cautious of offending.

Feet formed to do the office of hands.

I saw, the other day, at my own house, a little fellow, a native of Nantes, born without arms, who has so well disciplined his feet to perform the services his hands should have done him, that in reality his feet have in a great measure forgot their natural office. Moreover, he calls them his hands; he cuts with them, charges and discharges a pistol, threads a needle, sews, writes, puts off his hat, combs his head, plays at cards and dice, and all this with as much dexterity as any body; and the money I gave him he carried away in his foot as we do in our hand.

I knew another, who, when he was but a lad, <sup>A boy without hands flourished a two-handed sword, and a halbert, merely by the twisting and twining of his neck for want of hands, tossed them into the air, and caught them again; darted a dagger, and cracked a whip as well as any waggoner in France. But the effects of custom are much better discovered, by the strange impression it makes on our minds, where it does not meet with so much resistance. What has it not the power to impose upon our judgment and credulity? Omitting the gross impostures in religion, with which we have seen so many populous nations, and so many able men intoxicated (for this being beyond the sphere of human reason, an error is more excusable in such as are not by the divine favour enlightened in an extraordinary manner); is there any opinion so fantastic, but there are others as strange, which it has planted and established as laws in whatsoever countries it thought fit. And therefore that ancient exclamation was exceeding just, *Non pudet Physicum, id est, speculatorem, venatoremque Naturæ ab animis consuetudine imbutis querere testimonium veritatis?*\* Is it not a shame for a natural philosopher, whose business it is to investigate and pry into the secrets of nature, to have recourse to the prejudice of custom for the evidence of truth?</sup>

I reckon, that there is no fancy, how absurd soever, that can enter into the imagination of man, but it has the example of some public practice, and which is a sanction to our reason. There are people amongst whom it is a fashion to turn their backs upon the person whom they salute, and not to look in the face of the man whom they mean to honour. There is a court where, whenever the king spits, the lady that is his chief favourite holds out her hand to receive it; and another nation, where the most eminent persons about the sovereign stoop to the

The odd customs of diverse nations.

\* Cic. de Nat. Deorum, lib. i. cap. 30, translated by the Abbé d'Olivet.

ground to take up his ordure in a linen cloth. Let us here slip in a story. A French gentleman always blew his nose betwixt his fingers (a thing very unfashionable with us), which he justified, and being a man who had wit at will, he asked me what privilege had this nasty excrement, that we must carry a piece of fine linen about us to receive it in; and not only so; but, moreover, fold it up, and carry it carefully about in our pockets, which must be more offensive than to see it thrown away, as we do all our other evacuations? I thought that what he said was not altogether without reason; and, by being frequently in his company, custom made the practice appear not so strange, how hideous soever we think it, when it is reported of another country. Miracles appear such, according to our ignorance of nature, and not according to the real essence of nature. Custom blinds the eye of our judgment. We are as much a wonder to the barbarians, as they are to us, and with as much reason, as every one would acknowledge, if, after having reflected upon these remote examples, he was capable of reflecting on the examples he gives himself of his own customs, and comparing them fairly with the examples and usages of other nations. Human nature is a tincture equally infused into all our opinions and manners, of what form soever they are, infinite in matter, infinite in diversity. To return to my subject, there are people where (his wife and children excepted) no one speaks to the king but through a trunk. In one and the same nations the virgins discover their secret parts, and the married women carefully cover and conceal them. To this a certain custom bears some relation in another place, where chastity is only esteemed in the married state, for there the unmarried women may prostitute themselves to as many as they please, and, when with child, may take medicines publicly to procure abortion. And in another place, if a tradesman marries, all the tradesmen who are invited to the wedding lie with the bride before him; and

the more of them there are; the greater is her honour and her character for courage and ability. If an officer or nobleman marry, the case is the same; and so it is with others, except it be a labouring man, or some one of low degree; for then the lord of the manor performs the office, and yet a strict fidelity is recommended during the state of wedlock. There is a place where men are stewed in brothel-houses for the entertainment of the women, and where, in the married state, the wives go to the wars as well as their husbands, and take rank, not only in battle, but also in command. In some places they not only wear rings in their nostrils, lips, cheeks, and toes, but very weighty ones in their breasts and buttocks. In others, when they eat, they wipe their fingers upon their thighs, their cod-pieces, and the soles of their feet. In some places the children are not heirs, but only the brothers and nephews; and elsewhere only the nephews, saving in the succession to the crown. There are some places, where, for the regulation of the community of goods and estates observed in the country, certain sovereign magistrates have an universal commission to cultivate the lands, and distribute the fruits according to every one's necessity. In some places they mourn for the death of children, and feast at the decease\* of old men. In some places they lie ten or twelve in a bed, men and their wives together. In one country, the women whose husbands come to an untimely end, may marry again; others not. In another, the condition of women is so disliked, that the female issue of their marriages are destroyed, and they buy women of their neighbours for their occasions. In some places the men may be parted from their wives without showing any cause, but not the wives from the husbands for any cause whatever. In others the hus-

\* I fancy Montaigne took this from Herodotus, lib. v. p. 380, where the historian says, that certain people of Thrace weep at the birth of their young children, and bury their dead with great marks of joy.



bands are allowed to sell their wives if they are barren. In others they boil the corpse of the deceased, and then bruise it till it becomes like a jelly, which they mix with their wine, and drink. In some countries the most desirable sepulture is to be eaten by dogs,\* and elsewhere by birds. It is the opinion, in some places, that the souls of the happy live in all manner of liberty, in pleasant fields, furnished with all manner of conveniences, and that the echoes we hear come from them. In others they fight in the water, and shoot their arrows with success while they are swimming. In others they signify their subjection by lifting up their shoulders, and hanging down their heads, and put off their shoes when they enter the king's palace. The eunuchs in one place who have charge of the nuns, have moreover their noses and lips cut off, that they may be the less amiable; and where the priests put out their own eyes, to get acquaintance with their dæmons, and receive the oracles. In some places every one creates a deity out of what he pleases; the huntsman deifies a lion, or a fox; the fisherman, some fish or other; and they make idols of every human action or passion. The sun, the moon, and the earth are the principal deities; and the form of taking an oath is to touch the earth, with the eyes lifted up to the sun; and there they eat both flesh and fish raw. There is a place where the most solemn oath is to swear by the name of some deceased person who was of eminence in the country, laying the hand at the same time on his tomb. In some places the new-year's gift which the king sends to the princes his vassals, is fire; which being brought, all the old fire is put out, and this new fire all the neighbouring people are obliged to fetch every one for themselves, upon pain of incurring the guilt and punishment of high treason. In another place, when the king re-

\* Sextus Empiricus, Pyrrh. Hypol. lib. iii. cap. 24, p. 157.

† Herodot. lib. iv. p. 318. Nymphadorus, lib. xiii. Rerum Barbaricarum.

tires from his administration, purely to devote himself to religion (which often happens), his next successor is obliged to do the same ; by which means the right of the government devolves to the third person in the succession. In some places the form of government is varied according to the exigency of affairs. They depose the king when they think fit, substituting the elders of the people to the helm of government, and sometimes they transfer it to the hands of the commonalty. In some parts the men and women are both circumcised, and also baptized. In others the soldier, who in one or several engagements has happened to bring seven of the enemy's heads to the king, is made noble. In some countries they entertain the singular and unsociable opinion that the soul is mortal. In others the women are delivered of children without any complaint or fear. In some places they wear copper boots upon both legs, and if a louse bites them,\* they are bound by the obligation of magnanimity, to bite that louse again : and dare not marry, till they have first made a tender of their virginity. In other places the common way of salutation is, by touching the earth with a finger, and then pointing it up towards heaven. Some places there are where the men carry burdens upon their heads, and women upon their shoulders ;† and where the women piss standing, and the men couching down : where they send drops of their blood in token of friendship, and pay the same incense to the men they would honour, as to the gods : where kindred are not allowed to marry, not only to the fourth, but to any remoter degree of affinity : where the children are kept four years at nurse, and often twelve ; where it is also accounted mortal to give the infants the breast on the first day after it is born : where the correction of the male children is the peculiar province of the fathers, and that of the females the sole prerogative of the mothers, the

\* Herod. lib. iv. 317. Nicot.

† Ibid. p. 324

punishment being to suspend them by the heels in the smoke. In some places they actually circumcise the women, and eat all sorts of herbs, without scrupling any but such as have a bad smell. In some, all places are open, and their finest houses with the richest furniture, are without doors, windows, or chests, the punishment inflicted on thieves being double to what it is elsewhere. In some places they crack lice with their teeth like monkeys, and abhor killing them with their nails. In some places they never cut their hair, nor pare their nails; and in others they pare those of the right hand only, letting those of the left grow for ornament; and suffer the hair on the right side to grow as long as it will, while they keep the other side shaved;\* and in the neighbouring provinces some let their hair grow long before, as others do that behind, and shave the rest close. In some places the parents let out their children, and husbands their wives, to their guests for hire. Others there are, where men may get their own mothers with child, and fathers make use of their own daughters, or of their sons, without any scandal or offence. In others they interchangeably lend their children to one another at their festivals, without any consideration of proximity of blood. In one place men feed upon human flesh; in another, it is reckoned a charitable office for a man to kill his father at a certain age;† and elsewhere the fathers appoint the children, whilst yet in their mother's womb, some to be preserved, and carefully brought up, and others to be abandoned, and killed. Elsewhere the old husbands lend their wives to young men; and in other places they are in common without offence; nay, there is a country where the women wear, as a mark of honour, as many fringed tassals to their gowns as they have enjoyed men.‡

Moreover, has not custom made a republic of wo-

\* Herodot. lib. iv. p. 324.

† Sextus Empyricus, Pyrrh. Hypot. lib. iii. cap. 21, p. 153.

‡ Herodot. lib. iv. p. 319.

men, separately by themselves? Has it not put arms into their hands? made them to raise armies, and fight battles? and does it not, by its single precept, instruct the most ignorant vulgar in things which all the philosophy in the world could never beat into the heads of the wisest men? \* For we know entire nations, where death was not only despised, but heartily welcomed; where children of seven years old suffered themselves even to be whipped to death, without changing their countenance? † where riches were held in such contempt, that the meanest subject would not have deigned to stoop to take up a purse of crown pieces. And we know countries very fruitful in all manner of provisions, where the most common diet, and yet what they are most pleased with, was only bread, cresses, and water. ‡ Was it not custom also that worked that miracle in Chios, that in 700 years it was never remembered that either maid or wife did any thing to stain their honour? § To conclude, there is nothing, in my opinion, which custom does not, or is not capable of doing; and therefore Pindar justly calls it, the "Queen and the Empress of the World. ||" He that was reproved for beating his father made answer, that it was the custom of his family; that his father had in like manner beaten his grand-father; his grand-father, his great-grand-father; and, then pointing to him, this son of mine will beat me also, when he comes to my age. And the father, whom the son dragged along the street, bid him to stop at a certain door, because he himself had dragged his father no further, that being the utmost limit of the hereditary insolence with which the sons used to treat

\* The Thracians, Valer. Maximus, lib. ii. ch. 6, sect. 12.

† At Lacedæmon.

‡ In Persia, in the reign of Cyrus, Xenophon's *Cyropædia*, lib. i. cap. 8, and 11. Oxford edit. 1703.

§ Plutarch, in his *Treatise of the Virtuous Behaviour of Women*, in the article of those of Chios.

|| Herodotus, lib. iii. p. 200.

the fathers in their family. It is as much from custom, says Aristotle, as from infirmity, that women tear their hair, bite their nails, eat coals and chalk; and much more from custom than nature, that men abuse themselves with one another.

The origin  
of the laws  
of consci-  
ence.

The laws of conscience, which we pretend to be derived from nature, proceed from custom; every man having an internal veneration for the opinions and manners approved and received amongst his countrymen, cannot depart from them without reluctance, nor adhere to them without approbation.

How im-  
portant is the  
power of  
custom.

When the people of Crete, in times past, had a mind to curse any one, they prayed the gods to engage them in some evil habit.<sup>†</sup> But the principal effect of the power of custom, is to seize and entangle us in such a manner, that it is hardly in our power to disengage ourselves from its gripe, or so to recover ourselves, as to reason and discourse upon what it enjoins. To say the truth, because we suck it in with our mother's milk, and the face of the world presents itself in this posture to our first sight, it seems as if we were born upon condition of pursuing this very course; and the common fancies that we find in repute every where round us, and which we imbibe in our infancy, appear to be genuine and natural. From hence it appears, that whatever does not turn on the hinge of custom, is thought to be off of the hinges of reason, though, God knows, how unreasonably for the most part. If, as we, who study ourselves, have learned to do, every one who hears a just sentence, would immediately consider how it may any way affect himself, every one would find, that it was not so much a good saying, as a severe lash to the ordinary stupidity of his own judgment. But men receive the admonition of truth, and its precepts, as addressed to the vulgar only, and never to themselves; and instead of applying them to their own behaviour, every one is content with commit-

\* Valer. Maxim. lib. vii. in externis, sect. 15.

ting them to memory, very absurdly and unprofitably. Return we now to the tyranny of custom.

People that have been bred up to liberty, and to be their own masters, look upon every other system of government to be monstrous, and contrary to nature. Those who are inured to monarchy do the same; and though fortune may give them ever so favourable an opportunity of altering it, even when they have with the greatest difficulty disengaged themselves from the troublesome sway of one master, they hasten with like difficulties to place another in his room, so fond are they of the subjection they have been accustomed to.

Every nation is consistent with that sort of government which it is used to.

It is owing to custom, that every one is pleased with the spot in which he was planted by nature; and the Highlanders of Scotland\* pant no more for the fine air of Touraine, than the Scythians do for the delightful fields of Thessaly.

Why every one is pleased with his native country.

Darius asking the Greeks what they would take to follow the custom of the Indians,† in eating the bodies of their deceased parents? (for that was their practice, as believing they could not give them a better sepulture than in their own bodies) they made answer, that they would not do it for any thing in the world: but having also tried to persuade the Indians to leave off their custom, and to burn the bodies of their parents, after the manner of the Greeks, they conceived a still greater horror at the idea. Every one does the same; for custom veils the true aspect of things from our eyes:

A proposal made to the Indians and Greeks, how received.

*Nil adeo magnum, nec tam mirabile quicquam  
Principio, quod non minuant mirarier omnes  
Paulatim.‡*

\* These are an ignorant people, who are said to live only upon rapine. They who know nothing of the country, need only read Froissart, vol. ii. cap. 160, 169, and 174, and they will perceive why Montaigne sets Touraine in opposition to them.

† Herodotus, lib. iii. p. 200. As to the custom of the Indians eating the bodies of their dead parents, see Sextus Empyricus Pyrrh. Hypot. lib. iii. cap. 24, p. 157.

‡ Lucret. lib. ii. ver. 1027.

Nothing at first so great, or strange appears,  
But grows familiar in succeeding years.

Taking upon me once to justify an observation which was received with absolute authority round us for a great many leagues, and being not content, as people commonly are, to establish it only by force of laws and examples; but inquiring still further into its origin, I perceived the foundation so weak, that I, who strove to confirm it in others, was very near being dissatisfied with it myself. It is by this recipe that Plato\* undertakes to eradicate the unnatural and preposterous amours of his time, which he esteems the sovereign and principal remedy, viz. That the public opinion condemns them; that the poets, and all other writers, relate sad stories of them. A recipe, by the virtue of which the most beautiful daughters no longer allure their father's lusts, nor brothers of the finest shape the desire of their sisters; the very fables of Thyestes, Oedipus, and Macareus, having with the harmony of their song infused this wholesome belief into the tender brains of infants: Chastity is in truth an amiable virtue, the utility of which is sufficiently known; but to manage and set it off according to nature; is as difficult, as it is easy to do it according to custom, laws, and precepts. The scrutiny into the fundamental and universal reasons is difficult; and our masters, by skimming lightly over them, or not daring so much as to grope for them, precipitate themselves at first dash into the privilege of custom, in which they pride themselves and triumph. They who will not suffer themselves to be drawn from this original, commit an error still greater, and submit themselves to wild opinions; witness Chrysippus,† who, in so many of his writings, has shown the ridiculous light in which he looked upon incestuous conjunctions of what nature soever.

\* De Legibus, lib. viii. p. 646.

† Sextus Empyricus, Pyrrh. Hypot. lib. i. cap. 14, p. 31.

Whoever would disengage himself from this violent prejudice of custom, will find many things received without scruple, which have no real foundation in nature; but when this mask is taken off, and things referred to the decision of truth and reason; he will find his judgment, as it were, quite overthrown, and yet restored to a state much more sure. For example, I would then ask him, what can be more strange than to see people obliged to obey laws which they never understood, and to be bound in all their domestic affairs, marriages, grants, wills, sales, and purchases, to rules which they cannot possibly know, being neither written nor published in their own language, and of which they must necessarily pay for the interpretation and uses; not according to the ingenious sentiment of Socrates, who advised his king to make the traffic and negotiation of his subjects free and lucrative to them, and to charge their quarrels and debates with heavy taxes; but by a monstrous opinion to make a traffic of reason itself, and to make the laws as current as merchandise. I think myself obliged to fortune that (as our historians say) it was a Gascon gentleman, a countryman of mine, that was the first that opposed Charlemagne, when he attempted to impose Latin and imperial laws on us.

What sight can there be more savage, than to see a nation,\* where custom has made it lawful to sell the office of a judge, and to buy sentences with ready money, and where justice is legally denied to the party who has not wherewithal to pay for it; and where this merchandise is in so great credit, as to form a fourth estate in the government, viz. of lawyers, to be added to the three ancient ones of the church, the nobility, and the people; which fourth estate, having the laws in their hands, and the sovereign power over men's lives and fortunes, forms a

Custom the only foundation of many things much authorized in the world.

The inconveniences of the barbarous custom of selling justice.

\* France, where this disorder has even increased since Montaigne's time, and where it is like to last as long as the monarchy itself.



body separate from the nobility. From hence it comes to pass, that there are double laws, those of honour, and those of justice, in many things directly opposite to one another; the nobles as rigorously condemning a lie suffered, as the others do a lie revenged. By the martial law of arms, he who puts up an affront, shall be degraded from all nobility and honour; and by the civil law, he who takes revenge, incurs a capital punishment. He who has recourse to the laws to obtain satisfaction for an injury done to his honour, disgraces himself; and he who does not, is punished by the laws: and of these two branches, so different, yet both of them referring to one head, those have the care of peace, these of war; those the profit, these the honour; those wisdom, these virtue; those the privilege of speech, these of action; those justice, these valour; those reason, these force; those the long robe, these the short one.

The fantasticalness of custom in dress,

As for matters of indifference, such as apparel, where is the person who is for reducing it to its true use, which is the service and convenience of the body, upon which its original grace and decency depend. Among the most whimsical that I think can be invented, I will mention our square caps, that long tail of twisted velvet which hangs down from our women's heads with its whimsical trinkets, and that idle bauble of a model of a member, we cannot in modesty so much as mention, and which, nevertheless, we make public parade with.

As to externals, every man of good sense conforms to the custom of his country.

These considerations, however, will not prevail upon any man of understanding to decline the common mode: though I cannot help thinking, that all singular and far-fetched fashions are rather marks of folly and vain affectation, than of right reason; and that the wise man ought in his own mind to retire from the crowd, and there keep his soul at liberty, and in vigour to judge freely of things, while nevertheless, as to outward appearance, he ought entirely to conform to the fashions and forms of the time.

Public society has nothing to do with our private opinions; but as for the rest, namely, our actions, our labour, our lives, and fortunes, they must be bent and devoted to the public service, and to the common opinions; as the great and good Socrates refused to save his life by disobedience to the magistrate, though a very unjust and wicked one: for it is the rule of rules, and the general law of all laws, that every person should observe those of the place where he is:

*Νόμοις ἵστασθαι τοῖσιν ἰσχυροῖς καλόν.\**

Proceed we now to another topic. It is a matter of great doubt whether there is more profit than harm in changing a law that has been once received, be it what it will; forasmuch as a system of government is like to a building of divers parts, so joined together, that it is impossible to stir or shake any of them without affecting the rest. The legislator of the Thurians made an order,† that whoever offered to abolish any of the old laws, or to establish a new one, should come before the people with a halter about his neck, to the end that, if the innovation was not unanimously approved, he should be strangled on the spot. And that of Lacedæmon,‡ made it the business of his life to get a faithful promise from his citizens, that they would not infringe any of his ordinances. The Ephorus,§ who so rudely cut the two strings which Phrynis had added to music, never stood to examine whether that addition made a better harmony; it was enough for him to condemn the invention, because it was an alteration of the old composition: which also is the meaning of the old rusty sword of justice carried before the magistracy of Marseilles. For my part, I have an

Whether it is of use to change laws that have been established by long custom.

\* In *Excerptio Gratianis*, p. 397.

† Charondas, in *Diodorus of Sicily*, lib. xii. c. 4.

‡ Lycurgus. See his *Life* by *Plutarch*, ch. 21.

§ *Plutarch*, in his *Notable Sayings of the Lacedæmonians*, calls this Ephorus, *Emerepea*. *Valer. Max.* lib. ii. cap. 6, sect. 7.

aversion to novelty of what complexion soever, and have reason, having been an eye-witness of its mischievous consequences. The innovation which has for so many years oppressed this kingdom (France) has not indeed directly done all the mischief it has suffered, but it may be said, with some colour of reason, that it has accidentally fomented and produced all the evils and distresses that are since continued :

*Heu ! patior telis vulnera facta meis.\* i. e.*

Alas ! the wounds by which I smart,  
My own sharp weapons did impart.

They who give a shock to a state, are ready to be the first who are swallowed up in its ruin. The fruits of a public commotion are seldom enjoyed by the person who fomented it. He only disturbs the water for others to catch the fish. The unity and contexture of monarchy, in this great structure, having been remarkably broken and dissolved in its old age, by this innovation, has made way for the entrance of the like injuries. The royal majesty does not easily sink from the summit to the middle, but tumbles headlong from the middle to the foundation. But if the inventors do the most mischief, the imitators are the more criminal to follow examples, of which they have felt the evil : and if there be any degree of horror, even in doing ill, the latter owe to the former the glory of inventing, and the courage of making the first effort. New disorders of all kinds derive ideas and precedents for disturbing our government from this original and plentiful source. We read in our very laws made for the remedy of this primitive evil, the first essays of bad enterprises of all kinds, and the excuse made for them. And what Thucydides says of the civil wars in his time, is applicable to us, that, to palliate public vices, their true names are sophisticated and softened by new

\* Ovid, in Epist. of Phillis to Demophoon, ver. 48.

ones, which are not so harsh. It is intended, however, to reform our consciences and opinions. *Honesta oratio est* : \* i. e. "It is a plausible speech ;" but the best plea for innovation is very dangerous : and, to speak my thoughts with freedom, it seems to me to be great self-love and presumption in a man, to set such a value upon his own opinions, that the public peace must absolutely be destroyed to establish them, and a multitude of inevitable evils introduced into his own country, together with so dreadful a corruption of manners as a civil war, and the charges on the state in a matter of such consequence, always brings in its train. Is it not bad management to set up so many certain and palpable vices against errors that are doubtful and disputable ? Are there any views worse than these committed against a man's own conscience, and the natural light of his own reason ? The senate, upon its dispute with the people concerning the administration of their religion, presumed to make use of this evasive argument, † *Ad Deos id magis quam ad se pertinere ; ipsos visuros, ne sacra sua polluantur* : i. e. "That this affair was not so much their concern as that of the gods, who would themselves take care that their sacred mysteries were not polluted ;" according to the article which the oracle returned to those of Delphos ; who, in the Median war, dreading an invasion from the Persians, enquired of Apollo what they should do with the sacred treasure of his temple, whether they should hide it, or carry it elsewhere. To which the God returned for answer, "That they should not remove any thing, but only take care of themselves, forasmuch as he was sufficient to take care of his own property." ‡ The Christian religion

\* Terence, Andr. act 1, sc. 1, ver. 104.

† Tit. Liv. lib. x. ch. 6. The application which Montaigne here makes, of these words of Livy, agrees by no means with the construction they bear in that historian, as all who will be at the trouble to consult him may perceive.

‡ Herodot. lib. viii. p. 539, 540.

bears all the marks of justice and utility in an extreme degree, but none more manifest than the strict recommendation of obedience to magistrates, and the maintenance of the police. What a marvellous instance of this has the Divine Wisdom left us, who, in establishing the salvation of mankind, and in conducting this his glorious victory over death and sin, chose to do it only in conformity to our political government, and submitted his progress, and the conduct of so sublime and salutiferous an operation, to the blindness and injustice of our observations and customs; suffering the innocent blood of so many of his chosen favourites to be shed, and bearing with the loss of such a number of years, to the maturing of this inestimable fruit? There is a wide difference between the case of one who complies with the forms and laws of his country, and of another that undertakes to regulate and change them. The first pleads in his excuse simplicity, obedience, and example, so that whatever he does, it cannot be imputed to malice, but at the worst to misfortune. *Quis est enim, quem non moveat clarissimis monumentis testata, consignataque antiquitas?*\* i. e. "Who is there that is not touched with respect for antiquity, sealed and confirmed by the most illustrious testimonies?" Besides what Isocrates says, that deficiency is more a sharer in moderation than excess; the last is a track much more rugged:† for he who busies himself to choose and alter, usurps the authority of judging, and must take it upon himself to discover

\* Cicero de Divinatione, lib. i. ch. 40.

† All that follows from the words, "he who busies himself," to the passage from Cicero inclusively, ending thus, "not by Zeno, Cleanthes, nor Chrysippus," is not to be found in the folio edition by Abel Angelier, printed at Paris in 1595, three years after the death of our author; nor in another folio edition printed at Paris, by Michael Blageant, in 1640. I leave it to the reader to judge, whether this addition be Montaigne's or not; but I thought myself obliged to insert it in this edition, because I not only find it in the edition printed at Paris since 1640, but in one printed at Leyden, in 1689.

the defect of what he is for removing, and the benefit of what he is about to introduce. This consideration, however vulgar, is that which fixed me in my seat, and kept the rein upon even the rashest part of my youth, so as not to burden my shoulders with so dead a weight, as to render myself responsible for a science of such importance, and to presume in that state to do what in my more mature judgment I durst not attempt in the most easy thing I had ever learned, and wherein the rashness of judging does no harm, it seeming to me very unjust to go about to subject public and established customs and institutions to the weakness and instability of private fancy (for private reason has only a private jurisdiction), and to make that encroachment upon divine laws, which no government would suffer upon the civil laws; with which the human reason has much more concern than with the former; yet are they sovereignly judged by their own proper judges; and the utmost sufficiency serves only to explain and extend the custom derived from it, and not to divert, nor make any innovation in it. If sometimes the divine Providence has suspended the rules to which it has necessarily restrained us, it is not to give us a dispensation from them. These are only strokes of the divine hand, which we must not imitate, but admire, and extraordinary examples that purposely and particularly prove the kind of miracles which it offers us for a manifestation of its almighty power, above our rules and capacity, which it were folly and impiety to attempt to imitate, and which we ought not to follow, but to contemplate with astonishment; they being acts peculiar to the essence of him by whom they are performed, and not personal to us. Cotta declares very opportunely, when matters of religion are the subject, I hearken to T. Coruncanus, P. Scipio, P. Scævola, the high priests; but I give no ear to Zeno, Cleanthes, or Chrysippus.\* In our

\* Cic. de Natura Deorum, lib. iii. cap. 2.

present quarrel, where there are a hundred articles to be struck out and put in, articles that are also of very great importance, God knows, how many there are who can boast of their having nicely understood the grounds and reasons of both the parties. It is a number, if it amounts to a number, that would not be very able to disturb us. But what becomes of all the rest of the posse? Under what ensigns do they rank? The case is the same with them as with other weak and ill-applied medicines, whereby the humours they are designed to purge off, are only fermented, exasperated, and inflamed in the conflict, and left still behind. The medicine was too weak to purge us, but strong enough to weaken us, so that we cannot get rid of it, and receive no effect from its operation, but inward pains of long duration.

In cases of extreme necessity the old laws should give way to new regulations.

So it is, nevertheless, that fortune, say what we will, presents us sometimes with a necessity so urgent, that it is requisite the laws should give place to it: and where opposition is made to the increase of an innovation which intrudes itself by violence, for a man to keep himself in all places and things within bounds and rules against these who are at full liberty to do what they list, and to whom all things are lawful that may serve to advance their design, and who have no other law nor rule but to pursue their own advantage, is a dangerous obligation and inequality:

*Auditum nocendi perfido præstat fides.\**

The naked truth does her fair breast disarm,  
And gives to treachery a power to harm.

Forasmuch as the ordinary discipline of a healthful state does not provide against these extraordinary accidents, it presupposes a body that supports itself in its principal members and officers, and a common consent to its obedience and observation. To proceed, according to law, is a cold and constrained work, and not fit to make head against a licentious

\* Senec. in CEdip. act iii. ver. 693.

and unbridled proceeding. Those great personages, Octavius and Cato; in the two civil wars of Sylla and Cæsar, are to this day reproached, that they chose to let their country suffer the last extremities, rather than to relieve it at the expense of its laws, or to make any stir. For, in truth, in these last necessities, wherein there is no remedy, it would, perhaps, be more discreet to stoop and yield a little to receive the blow, than by opposing, without any possibility of doing good, make way for violence to trample every thing under foot; and it were better to make the laws do what they can, since they cannot do what they would. After this manner did he who suspended them for twenty-four hours; and he who for once shifted a day in the calendar; and that other, viz. Alexander the Great,\* who in the month of June made a second May. The Lacedæmonians themselves, religious observers as they were of the laws of their country, being straitened by their own law, which prohibited the choosing of the same man to be admiral twice; and on the other hand, their affairs necessarily requiring that Lysander should fill that office again, they made one Aracus admiral, it is true, but withal Lysander was superintendant of the marine.† By the same policy, one of their ambassadors being sent to the Athenians to obtain the alteration of some decree, and Pericles remonstrating to him that it was forbid to take away the tablet, or register wherein a law had been engrossed, advised him only to turn it over, forasmuch as this was not prohibited.‡ And Plutarch commends Philopæmen, that while born to command, he knew not only how to command according to the laws, but also to overrule the laws themselves,§ when the public necessity required it.

\* See his Life by Plutarch, in chap. 5 of Amyot's Translation.

† Plutarch in the Life of Lysander, cap. 4.

‡ Idem, in the Life of Pericles, cap. 18.

§ In the comparison of Titus Quintus Flaminius with Philopæmen, towards the end.



## CHAPTER XXIII.

*Different Events from the same Counsel.*

**JAMES AMYOTT**,\* great almoner of France, gave me this history one day, to the honour of a prince of ours (who, though of foreign extraction, was ours in very deed), that in the time of our first troubles, at the siege of Roan, that prince being advertised by the queen (mother to the king) of a plot that was formed against his life, and being particularly informed by his letters who was to be the chief conductor of it, viz. a gentleman of Anjou, or Maine, who at that time commonly came to the prince's palace for the purpose, he did not communicate his intelligence to any person in the whole world, but going, the next day, to St. Catherine's mount, where was our battery against Roan (which we at that time laid siege to) attended by the said great almoner, and another bishop, he took notice of this very gentleman, who had been described to him, and sent for him. When he came before him, the prince finding him pale, and trembling with the consciousness of his guilt, he said to him, " Mr. ——— you  
 " mistrust, I find, what I have to say to you, and your  
 " very countenance shows it ; it is in vain to think  
 " of hiding any thing from me, for I am so well in-  
 " formed of your business, that you will only make  
 " bad worse, by an attempt to conceal it ; you very  
 " well know, such a thing and such a thing, which  
 " were the links and limits to the most secret parts  
 " in the plot ; and therefore, as you value your  
 " life, do not fail to confess the truth of the whole  
 " design to me." When the poor man found he was detected (for the whole affair had been discovered to the queen by one of the accomplices), he had

\* The celebrated translator of Plutarch.

nothing to do, but with folded hands was going to throw himself at the feet of the prince to implore his mercy and forgiveness; but the prince prevented him, and proceeded to ask him as follows: "Pray, did I ever do any thing to disoblige you? Have I, from any particular spite, offended any that belonged to you? It is not above three weeks that I have known you; what inducement could you have to aim at my life?" To this the gentleman answered, with a faltering voice, "That he had no particular reason for it, but the interest of the cause of his party in general; and that he had been persuaded by some of them, that it would be a very pious act to extirpate so powerful an enemy to their religion by any means whatsoever." "Well," said the prince, "I will now let you see how much more amiable is the religion I maintain than that which you profess; yours has advised you to murder me without giving me a hearing, and without any provocation; whereas mine commands me to forgive you, though you know in your conscience that you would have killed me without any reason. Get you from hence instantly, and let me see you no more here; and if you are wise, choose honest men to be of your counsel in future designs."

Extraordinary clemency of a prince to one who had plotted to kill him.

*Henry 4*

The emperor Augustus, being in Gaul, had certain intelligence of a conspiracy which was formed against him by Lucius Cinna, for which he resolved to make an example of him;\* and, for that purpose, summoned a council of his friends to meet him next day; but the night preceding he was very uneasy in his mind to think that he was going to put to death a young gentleman of a good family, nephew to Pompey the Great, which made him break out into these complaints, "What! shall it be said that I live in terror and alarm, and suffer my assassin to walk abroad at his full liberty? Shall he go unpunished,

A plot against Augustus, which he discovered before it was ripe for execution.

\* See Seneca, in his Treatise of Clemency, lib. i. cap. 9, from whence the whole story is here transcribed verbatim.

“after having conspired against my life; a life which  
 “I have hitherto defended in so many civil wars,  
 “and so many battles both by land and sea, and  
 “after I had established universal peace in the  
 “world? Shall the man be pardoned after he had  
 “determined not only to murder, but to sacrifice  
 “me?” For the plot was laid to kill him while he  
 was assisting in some sacrifice. After this he re-  
 mained for some time silent, but then he began  
 again, in a louder note, to exclaim against himself,  
 saying, “Why livest thou, if it be a thing of  
 “such importance to so many people that thou  
 “shouldst die? Will there be no end to thy revenge  
 “and cruelty? Is thy life of so much worth, that so  
 “much mischief must be done to preserve it?”

His wife  
 Livia's ad-  
 vice to him,

Livia, his wife, perceiving him in this perplexity,  
 “Will you for once,” said she, “be advised by a  
 “woman? Imitate the physicians who, when com-  
 “mon remedies do no good, make trial of the con-  
 “trary. You have not done yourself any good hi-  
 “therto by your severity. Lepidus has followed Sa-  
 “videnus; Murena, Lepidus; Cæpio, Murena;  
 “Ignatius, Cæpio. Begin now and try how lenity  
 “and clemency will succeed. Cinna is found guilty,  
 “pardon him; it will be out of his power to hurt  
 “thee hereafter, and such forgiveness will redound  
 “to thy honour.”

Augustus  
 follows her  
 advice, and  
 makes a  
 speech to  
 Cinna, the  
 chief of the  
 conspira-  
 cy.

Augustus, very glad that he had met with an ad-  
 vocate of his own humour, thanked his wife; and  
 dismissing his friends whom he had summoned to  
 council, ordered that Cinna should be brought to  
 him alone; which being done, he commanded every  
 one out of the room, and when he was, by his ap-  
 pointment, seated in a chair,\* he spoke to him after

\* This circumstance, expressly noted by Seneca, is not imma-  
 terial, because it shows us the manners of that age; and therefore  
 I think that the celebrated Corneille did well to make use of it in his  
 tragedy of Cinna. A king who should think it derogatory to his  
 royalty ever to see his subjects sitting in his presence, would have  
 but a very diminutive idea of grandeur, which does not depend on

this manner; "In the first place, Cinna, I desire  
"you would hear me patiently; do not interrupt me  
"while I am speaking, after which I will give thee  
"time and leisure to answer me. Thou knowest, Cin-  
"na, that having taken thee prisoner in the enemy's  
"camp, when thou not only didst bear arms against  
"me, but was my enemy by birth, I saved thy life,  
"gave thee all thy estate, and enabled thee to live  
"so well, and so much at thy ease, that the victor  
"even envied the condition of the vanquished. The  
"sacerdotal office, which thou madest suit to me for,  
"I conferred upon thee, after having refused it others  
"whose ancestors always bore arms for me; notwith-  
"standing which, thou hast undertaken to kill me!"  
Cinna crying out at this, that he was very far from  
harbouring so wicked a thought, Augustus stopped  
him short, by saying, "Cinna, thou dost not keep  
"thy promise; thou didst assure me that I should  
"not be interrupted: yes, you did undertake to kill  
"me at such a time and place, in such company,  
"and in such a manner." At which words, seeing  
Cinna astonished and silent, not for having broke  
his promise to be silent, but from the sting of his  
conscience, "What," continued Augustus, "was  
"your reason for doing this? Was it to be made  
"emperor? Verily the public affairs are in a bad  
"state, if I am the only man in the way of thy ad-  
"vancement to the empire. Thou art not so much  
"as able to defend thy own family, and wast lately  
"nonsuited in a cause by a mere libertine. What!  
"will nothing avail thee but to attempt the ruin of  
"Cæsar? I give up the cause, if there is none but  
"I to obstruct thy hopes. Dost thou imagine that  
"Paulus, Fabius, the Cossæans and Servilians, and  
"so many Patricians, not only noble by title, but  
"such as honour their nobility by their virtue, will

distinctions of this kind. A king, truly respectable, may freely dis-  
pense with this liberty, without risking the loss of any thing, any  
more than Augustus, Trajan, or Marcus Aurelius.

"bear with thee?" After a great deal more that he said to him (for he talked to him above two whole hours), "Now, go thy way," said he, "I give thee that life, Cinna, as a traitor, and a parricide, which I gave thee heretofore as an enemy. Let friendship commence betwixt us from this day forwards; let us try which of us two are the honestest men, I who have given thee thy life, or thou who hast received it." And thus he took his leave of him. Some time after he preferred him to the consular dignity, complaining that he had not the confidence to demand it, had a strong friendship for him, and made him sole heir to his estate. Now from the time of this accident, which befel Augustus in the fortieth year of his age, there was never any conspiracy or attempt formed against him, and he thereby reaped a just reward for his clemency; but it did not turn out so well for our prince, in the preceding story, for his lenity was not sufficient to secure him from falling into the snares of the like treason, so vain and frivolous a thing is human prudence, and in spite of all our counsels, projects, and precautions, fortune is always the mistress of events.

On what  
the success  
of physic is  
founded.

We repute physicians fortunate, when they hit upon a lucky cure; as if theirs was the only art that could not maintain its own ground, that its basis was too weak to support itself by its own strength, and as if no other art stood in need of the assistance of fortune in its operations. For my part, I have as good, or as bad an opinion of physic as you please, for, God be thanked, we hold no correspondence. I think differently from other men; for I always heartily despise it; and when I am sick, instead of entering into a composition with it, I begin yet more to detest and dread it; and when friends press me to take physic, I tell them to give me time, at least till I am restored to my health and strength, that I may be the better able to support the violence and danger of their potion. I leave nature to its operation, and am prepossessed with an opinion, that it is suf-

sufficiently armed with teeth and talons to defend itself when attacked, and to maintain that contexture of which it abhors the dissolution ; for I am afraid, that the endeavour to assist it when it grapples with the disease, would really give aid not to nature, but to its adversary, and that it would create new difficulties.

Now, I say, that fortune has a great share, not in physick only, but in several other more certain arts. The poetic sallies which transport and ravish their author out of himself, why should we not ascribe them to his good fortune, since the poet himself confesses they exceed his capacity, and acknowledges them to proceed from something else than himself, and has them no more in his own power, than the orators say they have in their power those extraordinary motions and agitations that sometimes push them beyond their design ?

Fortune has a great share in the flights and sallies of poetry.

So in painting, strokes shall sometimes slip from the hand of the painter, so surpassing his fancy and skill, as to excite both his admiration and astonishment. Nay, fortune does yet more plainly demonstrate the share she has in all works of this kind, by the elegancies and beauties that appear in them, not only beyond the intention, but even without the knowledge of the artist himself. A judicious reader often finds out in another man's writings perfections different from what were either intended or perceived by the author, and gives them a richer construction and complexion.

And in painting.

As to military enterprises, every one sees what a good share fortune has in them. Even in our councils and deliberations there must certainly be a mixture of good and bad luck, for all that our wisdom can do avails very little. The more acute and quick it is, the weaker it finds itself, and the more diffident it is of itself. I am of Sylla's opinion ; and when I look more nicely into the most glorious exploits of war, I perceive, methinks, that the conductors of them make use of deliberation and counsel only for

And in military enterprises.

form sake, leaving the best share of the enterprise to fortune, and, depending upon her aid, transgress at every turn the limits of justifiable conduct. There happen sometimes accidental alacrities and strange furies in their deliberations, which prompt them frequently to the most improbable course, and swell their courage beyond the bounds of reason. From hence it falls out, that many great commanders of old, to give a sanction to their rash resolutions, have told their soldiers, that they were induced thereto by some inspiration, omen, or prognostic. *as Napoleon*

The course that must be taken in cases the event of which is uncertain.

In this uncertainty and perplexity, owing to our incapacity to discern and choose what is of the greatest advantage, by reason of the difficulties arising from the various accidents of things, I think, that though no other consideration should be our motive, the surest way would be to pitch upon that course which is most just and honourable; and, as the shortest way is not evident, to keep always in the direct path; forasmuch as in the two instances I have just now mentioned, it is not to be doubted that it was more noble and generous in him who had received the injury, to pardon it, than if he acted otherwise; and if the first was disappointed in it, he is not to be blamed for his good intention, it not being a clear point, whether, if he had acted a contrary part, he would have escaped the issue to which he was doomed by his destiny, and have lost the reputation of such an act of humanity.

Whether it is of advantage to prevent conspiracies by bloody executions.

In history there are many instances of persons under this impression of fear, by which most of them have been impelled to obviate the conspiracies that were forming against them, by revenge and punishment, but I find very few to whom this remedy has been of service: witness many of the Roman emperors. Whoever finds himself in this danger, ought not to expect much either from his strength or his vigilance: for how difficult is it for a man to guard against an enemy who wears the countenance of the most officious friend we have, and to know the incli-

nation and inward sentiments of those who are present with us. It is to very little purpose for a man to have a guard of foreigners, and to be always fenced about by files of men in arms, since whoever does not value his own life, will always be master of that of another man.

Moreover, that continual suspicion which makes a prince jealous of all mankind, must needs be a strange torment to him. Therefore it was that Dion, being warned that Callippus watched for opportunities to take away his life, never had the heart to enquire particularly into the matter, saying, that he had rather die, than live in such misery, to be upon his guard, not only against his enemies, but against his friends.\* Alexander behaved with more spirit and resolution, when, being advised by a letter from Parmenio, that Philip, his darling physician, was bribed with money by Darius to poison him, at the same time that he gave the very letter to Philip to read, swallowed the dose he had brought him.† Was not this a declaration of his resolution, that if his friends had a mind to despatch him out of the world, to give them free liberty to do it? This prince is celebrated for hazardous actions; but I do not know whether, in all his life, there be another passage that demonstrates more constancy than this, or any noble action of his that shines with so much lustre. They who preach up to princes such a circumspect diffidence, under colour of dictating for their security, do only preach to their ruin and dishonour. Nothing truly noble is achieved without hazard. I know a person naturally of a very enterprising, heroic courage, whose good fortune is continually prevented by such persuasions as these; that he keep those only about him whom he knows to be his friends; that he hearken to no reconciliation with his old ene-

The sad  
state of a  
prince who  
is too mis-  
trusting.

\* Plutarch, in the notable sayings of the ancient kings.

† Quintus Curtius, lib. iii. cap. 6.



mies; that he live retired, and not venture his person with hands stronger than his own, what promise soever may be made to him, or what prospect soever he may have of advantage. I know another, who has unexpectedly made his fortune by following quite contrary advice.

How far  
courage  
ought to be  
exerted.

The courage of which men so greedily court the glory, is displayed, upon occasion, as magnificently in a doublet as in a coat of mail; in a cabinet as in a camp; with the arm hanging down, as well as lifted up. Such tender and wary precaution is a mortal enemy to noble exploits. Scipio, in order to sound Syphax's intention, leaving his army, and abandoning Spain, not yet well settled in his new conquest, could pass over to Africa in two contemptible bottoms, implicitly commit himself, in an enemy's country, to the power of a barbarian king upon the single security of the greatness of his own courage, his good fortune, and his elevated hopes. *Habita fides ipsam plerumque fidem obligat*.\* i. e. The confidence we repose in another often procures the return of the like confidence. On the contrary, for a life of ambition and eclat, it is necessary to hold a stiff rein upon suspicion. Fear and diffidence invite and draw on injury. The most jealous of our kings (Lewis XI.) established his affairs chiefly by voluntarily trusting his enemies with his life and liberty, manifesting thereby his entire confidence in them, to the end that they might repose the same in him. Cæsar opposed only the authority of his countenance, and the sharpness of his rebukes, to his armed legions that mutinied against him; and he trusted so much to himself and his fortune, that he was not afraid to abandon and commit it to a seditious and rebellious army:

—————*Stetit aggere fulti*  
*Cespitis, intrepidus vultu, meruitque timeri*  
*Nil metuens.*†

\* Livius.

† Lucan, lib. v. ver. 316, &c.

Upon a parapet of turf he stood,  
 His manly face with resolution shone ;  
 And chill'd the mutineers' inflamed blood,  
 Challenging fear from all, by fearing none.

This undaunted assurance, however, cannot be represented to perfection, but by such as are not frightened by the apprehension of death, and the worst that can happen ; for to offer a trembling resolution, which is ever doubtful and uncertain, for the service of our important reconciliation, is nothing to the purpose. It is an excellent way for a person to win the heart and good will of another, to offer his service and trust to him, provided it be freely and unconstrained by necessity, and that he manifest a pure and entire confidence in him, and a countenance clear of the least cloud of suspicion. When I was a boy, I saw a gentleman, a commanding officer in a great city, who, on occasion of a popular commotion, in order to suppress it in the bud, went out of a place where he was very secure, and committed himself to the mercy of the turbulent rabble ; but it was ill for him that he did so, for he was there miserably killed. Nevertheless, I do not think he was so much to blame in going out, as for having chose a method of submission and meekness, and for endeavouring to appease this storm, rather by being a follower than a leader, and by entreaty rather than remonstrance. And I am inclined to believe, that a graceful severity, with a soldier-like way of commanding, full of security and confidence, suitable to his rank, and the dignity of his office, would have succeeded better with him ; at least, he would have died with more honour and decency. There is nothing so little to be expected from this many-headed monster, when thus stirred up, as humanity and good-nature. It is much more susceptible of reverence and fear. Having taken a resolution, in my opinion, rather brave than rash, of throwing himself weak and naked into this tempestuous sea of madmen, he

Confidence  
 must be in  
 reality, or  
 appearance,  
 void  
 of fear.

ought boldly to have stemmed the tide, and not have suffered himself to be carried away with it; whereas, when he began to see his danger near at hand, his nose happening to bleed, that easy smiling countenance which he had assumed was changed into one of fear, his voice and eyes showing both amazement and repentance, and by endeavouring to steal away and secure his person, he did but inflame them, and called them upon him.

A confidence in suspected troops which had a happy issue.

A general review was once talked of, of certain forces under arms (that being the most likely opportunity of secret revenge, so that there is no place where it can be exercised with more safety); and it was public and notorious that it was not safe for some to come, whose principal and necessary office it was to view them. A council was held, and several things proposed, as in a matter not only of difficulty, but also of weight and consequence. One was, that they should above all things avoid giving the least sign of any mistrust, and that the officers most in danger should come with erect and open countenances, mingle themselves in the files, and instead of sparing fire (to which the other opinions inclined most), they should solicit the captains to fire in platoons, as a salvo to the spectators, and not to be sparing of their powder. This was so pleasing to the suspected troops, that from that time forwards there subsisted a mutual confidence among them.

The measures which Julius Cæsar took to gain the love of his enemies.

I think the method which Julius Cæsar took was the best that can be followed. In the first place, he endeavoured to win the hearts of his very enemies by clemency, contenting himself, when any conspiracy was discovered to him, with the single declaration that he knew it before. This done, he took a noble resolution to expect, without solicitude or fear, whatever might be the event, abandoning and resigning himself to the care of the gods and fortune; for no doubt he was in this mind at the very instant he was killed.

A foreigner intimated, that if the tyrant of Syracuse, Dionysius, would give a good sum of money, he could inform him of a method how he might be certain of discovering all conspiracies which his subjects might form against him. Dionysius, hearing of it, sent for him, to teach him an art so necessary for his preservation: the person told him, that there was nothing more in the art, than that he should give him a (Roman) talent, and then boast that he had learned a singular secret from him.\* Dionysius approved of the contrivance, and ordered him 600 crowns. It was not likely that he should give so great a sum to a person unknown, but as a reward for a very useful discovery, the belief of which served to keep his enemies in awe. Princes, however, do very wisely to publish the advices they receive of practices against their lives, in order to create an opinion that they have good intelligence, and that nothing can be plotted against them, of which they have not some tidings. The duke of Athens did many ridiculous things in the establishment of his new tyranny over Florence; but the most remarkable was this, that having received the first intelligence of the conspiracies which the people were forming against him, by means of Mattheo di Moroso, their accomplice, he put him to death, in order to stifle the report, and that it might not be thought any man in the city disliked his government.

Advice to a tyrant, how to guard against any plots.

I remember to have formerly read a story of a certain Roman, a personage of dignity, who, in his flight from the tyranny of the Triumvirate, escaped a thousand times from his pursuers by a thousand subtilties. It happened one day that a troop of horse, which was sent to take him, passed close by a brake in which he lay hid, and narrowly missed him. But he, considering the pain and hardships which he had already so long endured to escape the strict and continual search that was every where made for him, the

Extraordinary resolution.

\* Plutarch, in the notable sayings of the ancient kings.

little pleasure he could hope for in such a life, and how much better it was for him to die once for all, than to be perpetually in this dread; he that instant called them back, showed them where he hid himself, and voluntarily surrendered himself to their cruelty, in order to rid both himself and them of any farther trouble. To call upon an enemy to dispatch one, seems a little too rash; yet, I think, he did better to take that course, than to live in continual apprehension, for which there was no other cure. But seeing that all the remedies which can be applied to such a case, are full of uneasiness and uncertainty, it is better to prepare with a good appearance for the work that may happen, and to be comforted with the consideration, that we are not certain that what we so much dread will come to pass.

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## CHAPTER XXIV.

### *Of Pedantry.*

Pedants  
condemned  
by the men  
of best  
sense.

I WAS often vexed, when I was a boy, to see a pedant always brought in as a coxcomb in the Italian comedies, and that the title of master was in no greater esteem amongst us; for as I was put under their tuition, could I help having a tenderness for their reputation? I endeavoured; indeed, to excuse them from the natural disparity that is betwixt the vulgar, and persons of excellent and uncommon judgment and knowledge; but in this I was non-plussed, when I found, that the men of the best sense were they who most heartily despised them; witness our famous poet, Du Bellay:

*Mais je hay par sur tout un sçavoir pedantesque.*

But above all things I abominate pedantic learning.

And they used to do so in former times; for Plutarch says, that the terms Grecian and Scholar were names of reproach and contempt among the Romans. Afterwards I found, by the experience of years, that they had abundant reason for it, and that *magis magnos clericos non sunt magis magnos sapientes* : \* i. e. That the greatest scholars are not the wisest men. But how it should come to pass, that a mind, enriched with the knowledge of so many things, does not thereby become the more quick and lively, and that a gross and common understanding should find room, without improving itself, for the discourses and judgments of the most excellent genius the world ever produced, I am yet to seek. A young lady, one of the first of our princesses, said to me once, speaking of a certain person, that he admitted so many wild and strange notions, and such strong conceptions, that his brains must be crowded and pressed together into a less compass, to make room for any others. I should be ready to conclude, that as plants are drowned with too much moisture, and lamps with too much oil, so too much study and business has the same effect upon the operation of the mind; which being employed and embarrassed by a variety of matter, has no power to throw off the weight which keeps it bowed, and, as it were, benumbed: but it is quite otherwise; for the mind, the fuller it is, the more it expands itself; and, to look back to ancient times, we see men very sufficient for the management of public affairs, great captains and great statesmen, who were withal men of great learning. As to the philosophers, who were retired from all public affairs, their opinions and singularities have also sometimes exposed them to ridicule. Would you make them judges of the merits of a law-suit, or of a man's actions? They are fully prepared for it, and straight begin to examine if there

\* A kind of proverb, which is only mentioned in this rough manner to render the pretenders to learning the more ridiculous. You will find it in Rabelais, lib. i. cap. 29.

be life, if there be motion, if the man be any other than an ox;\* what is active and passive, and what sort of animals law and justice are. Do they speak either of a magistrate, or to him, it is with an irreverent and uncivil freedom. Do they hear a prince or a king commended,† they treat him, at best, but as an idle shepherd, that busies himself only about milking and shearing his flock. Do you esteem any man of the greater consequence for being lord of 2000 acres of land?‡ they laugh at your regard, being accustomed to claim the whole world for their possession. Do you boast of your nobility, or their being descended from seven rich ancestors? they look upon you with contempt, as men that have no notion of the universal image of nature, and that do not consider how many predecessors every one of us have had, rich, poor, kings, slaves, Greeks, and barbarians. And though you were the fiftieth descendant from Hercules, they think you vain to set such a value on this, which is only a gift of fortune. Consequently the vulgar scorned them, as men who were ignorant of the world.

The wide difference between the ancient philosophers and our pedants.

But this Platonic picture does by no means resemble our pedants; for the philosophers were envied for thinking themselves better than the common sort of men, despising public affairs and transactions, affecting a particular manner of life, and discoursing in bombast and obsolete language. But the pedants are despised for being below the usual form, for being incapable of public offices, and, for their low-life manners, resembling the vulgar. *Odi homines,*

\* If Montaigne has copied this from Plato's Theatetes, p. 127, F. as it is plain by all which he has added immediately after, that he has taken it from that dialogue, he has grossly mistaken Plato's sentiment, who says here no more than this, that the philosopher is so ignorant of what his neighbour does, that he scarce knows whether he is a man, or some other animal; τὸν ταῦτα ὁ μὲν παρὶς καὶ ὁ γινώσκων λήθει, ὁ μὲν ὅτι πᾶσι, ἀλλὰ λόγῳ καὶ ἐν ἀνθρώποις ἴσιν, ἢ τι ἄλλο ζῷον.

† Plato's Theatetes, p. 128, A.

‡ Plato's Theatetes, p. 128, R. E.

*ignava opera, philosophica sententia* :\* i. e. I hate the men who think like philosophers, but at the same time are mere triflers. As for those same philosophers, I must needs say, that as they were great men in science, they were yet much greater in all their actions, as it is said of the geometrician of Syracuse,† who, being disturbed in his contemplation, in order to put some of his skill in practice for the defence of his country, suddenly set on foot certain terrible engines, which wrought effects beyond all human belief; yet, nevertheless, he himself despised his own handywork, thinking that, by playing the mechanic, he had debased the dignity of his art, of which he reckoned those performances but trivial exertions, by way of experiment. So they sometimes, when they have been put upon the proof of action, have been seen to fly to so high a pitch, that it plainly appeared their hearts and souls were elevated to a strange degree, while their minds were enriched with the knowledge of things. Nay some, who saw the reins of government seized by persons incapable of holding them, have avoided all share in the management of affairs. And he who asked Crates, how long he thought it necessary to philosophise, received for answer, “As long as our armies are “commanded by blockheads.”‡

Heracitus resigned the royalty to his brother;§ and the Ephesians reproaching him for spending his time in playing with boys before the temple, “Is it “not better,” said he,|| “to do so, than to sit at the “helm of affairs with you?” Others, having their

\* Pacuvius apud Aul. Gellius, lib. xiii. cap. 8.

† Archimedes, in Plutarch's Life of Marcellus, ch. 6 of Amyot's translation.

‡ Diogenes Laertius, in the Life of Crates, lib. vi. sect. 92.

§ Diogenes Laertius, in the Life of Heracitus, lib. ix. sect. 6. By *Heracitus* is to be understood, according to Ménage, not royalty in the proper sense of the word, but a particular office which was so styled at Ephesus, as well as at Athens and Rome, after their renunciation of a monarchical government.

|| Ibidem, sect. 3.



thoughts elevated above the world and fortune, have looked upon the tribunals of justice, and even the thrones of kings, with an eye of contempt and scorn. Thus Empedocles refused the royalty which was offered to him by the Agrigentines.\* Thales, once inveighing against the care and pains men took to grow rich, was compared to the fox, who said of the grapes which he could not come at, that they were sour; whereupon he had a mind, for the jest's sake, to show them an experiment to the contrary; and after having prostituted his learning in the search of profit and gain, he set up a traffick,† which in less than a year brought him so much wealth, that the most experienced in the business were scarce able, with all their industry and economy, to rake so much together in their whole lives. What Aristotle reports of some, who termed Thales, Anaxagoras, and the like sort of men *wise*, but not *prudent*, for not taking due care of the main chance, though I do not well digest the difference of those epithets, will not however serve as an excuse for my pedants; for to consider the low and necessitous fortunes with which they are contented, we have rather reason to pronounce, that they are neither wise nor prudent.

Men of  
learning  
contempt-  
ible for  
their wrong  
education.

But, to give up this first reason, I think it better to say, that the misfortune arises from their wrong method of applying themselves to the sciences; and that, after the manner in which we are instructed, it is no wonder if neither the scholars or the masters are a whit the more capable of business, though they are the more learned. In truth, the care and expense our parents are at, have no other aim but to furnish our heads with knowledge, but not a word of judgment and virtue. Cry out of one that passes by.

\* Diogenes, in the Life of Empedocles, lib. viii. sect. 63.

† Cicero de Divinatione, lib. i. cap. 49, says, that Thales, in order to show that it was possible, even for a philosopher, if he pleased, to get an estate, bought up all the olive trees in the Milesian field before they were in bloom. See Diogenes Laertius, in the Life of Thales, lib. i. sect. 26.

“ O! what a learned man is that!” and of another, “ O! what a good man is that!” the people will not fail to turn their eyes, and pay their respects to the former. There should then be a third man to cry out, “ O! what blockheads are they!” Men are ready to ask, does he understand Greek or Latin? Is he a poet or prose writer? But whether he is the better or more discreet man, though it is the main question, is the last; for the inquiry should be, who has the best learning, not who has the most.

We only take pains to stuff the memory, and leave the understanding and conscience quite unfurnished. They only study to load the memory. As the birds which fly abroad to forage for grain, bring it home in the beak, without tasting it themselves, to feed their young; just so our pedants pick knowledge out of several authors, and hold it at their tongue's end, to spit out and distribute it abroad. It is strange to think how guilty I myself am of this very folly; for do I not the same thing almost throughout this whole treatise? I cull here and there out of several books such sentences as please me, not to keep them in my memory (for I have none to retain them), but to transplant them into this work, where, to say the truth, they are no more mine than they were in the places from whence I took them.

We are, as I conceive, only skilled in the knowledge of the present, and not at all of what is past, They only aim at making a vain display of their learning. or to come; but the worst of it is, the scholars and pupils of these pedants are no better nourished or improved by it, and it passes from one hand to another for this purpose, only to make a show of it in conversation, and story-telling, like those glittering counters, which are of no other use or service but to play or count a game with. *Apud alios loqui didicerunt, non ipsi secum*.\* i. e. They have learned to converse with others, but not with themselves. *Non est loquendum, sed gubernandum*:† the business is not to talk, but to manage.

\* Cic. Tusc. Quæst. lib. v. cap. 36.

† Senec. Epist. 108.

Nature, to show that its conduct is not wild, does often, in nations which are the least cultivated by art, give rise to productions of genius, such as are a match for the greatest efforts of art. In relation to what I am now speaking of, the Gascon proverb derived from a reed pipe, has a delicate meaning, *Bouha pro bouha, mas a remuda lous dits qu'em* : i. e. You may blow your heart out, but if once you stir your fingers, it is all over. We can exclaim, says Cicero, these were the morals of Plato; these the very words of Aristotle: but what do we say ourselves that is our own? What is it we do? What is our own judgment? A parrot would say as much to the purpose as this.

The stupidity of a Roman, who fancied himself a man of learning, because he had learned men in his pay.

This puts me in mind of that wealthy Roman,\* who had taken care, though at a very great expense, to collect able men in every science, whom he kept continually in his company, to the end, that if amongst his friends any topic of discourse should be started, they might supply his place, and be ready to prompt him, one with a saying,† another with a verse of Homer; &c. every one according to his talent; and he fancied this knowledge to be his own, because it was in the heads of those whom he retained about him; as they also do whose fund of learning lies in their sumptuous libraries. I know one, who, when I ask him a question, calls for a book to show me the answer; and he would not even have the courage to tell me he has the piles, without having immediate recourse to his dictionary to find out the meaning of the words scab and fundament.

\* Claviseus Sabinus. He lived in the time of Seneca; who, besides what Montaigne here says of him, reports stories that are even more ridiculous of this rich impertinent, epist. 27.

† His memory was so bad, that he every now and then forgot the names of Ulysses, Achilles, and Priam, though he had known them as well as we knew our pedagogues; yet he had a mind to be thought learned, and invented this compendious method, viz. he bought slaves at a great price, one who was master of Homer, another of Hesiod, and nine of lyric poetry, to whom he, every now and then, had recourse for verses, which in rehearsing he often stopped in the middle of a verse, yet he thought he knew as much as any one in the house did. Seneca, *ibid.*

We take other men's opinions upon trust, and give ourselves no manner of trouble; whereas we should make them our own. In this we seem to be very like the man, who, wanting fire, went to his neighbour's house to fetch it,\* and finding a very good one there, stayed to warm himself by it, but never remembered to carry any home with him. Of what service is it to us to have a bellyful of meat, if it does not digest, if it does not change its form in our bodies, and if it does not nourish and strengthen us? Can we imagine that Lucullus, whose learning, without any manner of experience, made and formed him so great a commander, acquired it after our manner? We suffer ourselves to lean so much upon the arms of others, that our strength is of no use to us. Would I fortify myself against the fear of death, I do it at the expense of Seneca; would I extract consolation for myself or my friend, I borrow it from Cicero; whereas I might have found it in myself, if I had been trained up in the exercise of my own reason. I do not fancy this acquiescence in second-hand hearsay knowledge; for though we may be learned by the help of another's knowledge, we can never be wise but by our own wisdom:

Μισῶ σοφιστὴν ὅστις ἐχ' αὐτῷ σοφός.† i. e.

Who in his own concern's not wise,  
I that man's wisdom do despise.

Therefore, says Ennius, *Nequidquam sapere sapientem, qui ipsi sibi prodesse non quiret*:‡ i. e. Vain is the wisdom of that sage who cannot profit himself by it.

\* This comparison may be found at the end of Plutarch's Treatise of Hearing; and from thence it is, no doubt, that Montaigne took it, because he expresses it almost in the very words of Amyot's translation.

† The words of Euripides, as Cicero tells us, ep. 15, to Cæsar, lib. xiii.

‡ Cicero de Offic. lib. iii. cap. 15.

——— *Si cupidus, si*  
*Vanus, et Euganeâ quantumvis mollior agnâ.\* i. e.*  
 If he is covetous, a liar, or effeminate.

*Non enim paranda nobis solum, sed fruenda sapientia est.† i. e.* For wisdom is not only to be acquired, but enjoyed.

Dionysius† laughed at the grammarians, who were so solicitous to know what were the miseries which Ulysses suffered, and do not know their own; at musicians, who are so exact in tuning their instruments, and never tune their manners; and at orators, who study to declare what is justice, but not to perform it. If our mind takes so wrong a bias, and if the judgment be so unsound, I should have liked it altogether as well, if my scholar had spent his time at tennis, for then the body would at least have acquired greater agility. Do but observe him when he is come from school, after spending fifteen or sixteen years there; nothing is so unfit for business. All that you find in him more than he had before he went thither, is, that his Latin and his Greek have rendered him only a greater and a more conceited coxcomb than he was when he went from home. He ought to have returned with his head well furnished, whereas it is only puffed up, and inflated.

The character of pretenders to learning.

These sparks, as Plato says of the sophists, their cousins-german, are of all men those who promise to be the most useful to their fellow-creatures, and who alone, of all men, do only not amend what is committed to them, as a carpenter and a mason does, but make bad worse, and take pay for it to boot. If the rule which Protagoras proposed to his pupils was followed, either that they should give him his own

\* Juv. Sat. viii. ver. 14, 15.

† Cicero de Finib. lib. i. cap. 1.

‡ In all the editions of Montaigne which I have seen, without excepting Mr. Cotton's translation, Dionysius is mentioned; yet the wise reflections which Montaigne here ascribes to Dionysius, were made by Diogenes the cynic, as may be seen in that philosopher's life written by Diogenes Laertius, lib. vi. sect. 27, 28.

demand, or take an oath in the temple, what value they set upon the advantage they had received from this discipline, and satisfy him accordingly for his trouble ; my pedagogues would be horridly frustrated, especially if they were to be judged by the testimony of my experience. In my vulgar Perigordin language such smatterers in learning are pleasantly called *lettre-ferits*, as if one should say, they were letter-marked, or had letters stamped on them by the stroke of a mallet ; and, in truth, they seem, for the most part, to be sunk even below common sense. For you see the peasant and the cobbler go simply and honestly in their own way, speaking only of what they know and understand ; whereas these fellows are continually perplexing and entangling themselves, in order to make a parade of that knowledge, which floats only on the superficies of the brain. They say a good thing sometimes, but let another apply it. They are wonderfully well acquainted with Galen, but not at all with the disease of the patient. They have stuffed your ears with the laws, but know nothing of the merits of the case : they have the theory of every thing, but you must seek for others to put it in practice.

I have sate by when a friend of mine, at my own house, for sport's sake, has, with one of these fellows, counterfeited a jargon of unconnected gibberish, patched up of various pieces, without head or tail, saving that he interlarded certain terms, here and there, which were peculiar to the subject of their dispute ; by which means he amused the blockhead in debating the point, from morning to night, who thought he had always fully answered every objection : and yet this was a man of letters and reputation, and had a fine robe :

Character  
of a true  
pedant.

*Vos O patricius sanguis, quos vivere fas est  
Occipiti cæco, posticæ occurrere sanæ.\* i. e.*

Ye nobles, whom flatterers easily blind,  
Be guarded against a scar from behind.

\* Pers. Sat. i. ver. 61, 62.

Whoever narrowly pries into this kind of men, whose number is very extensive, will, as I have done, find that, for the most part, they neither understand themselves nor others, and that, though they have strong memories, their judgment is very shallow, unless where nature itself has given them another turn, as I observed in Adrianus Turnebus, who, though he never made other profession than that of learning only, in which, in my opinion, he was the greatest man that has been these thousand years, yet had nothing pedantic about him, but the wear of his robe, and a certain external fashion that was uncourtly, which are things of no moment; and I hate our people who dislike the pedant worse than his impertinence, and take their measure of a man's understanding by the bow he makes, his very gesture, and even by his boots. For within this outside of his there was not a more illustrious soul upon earth. I have often, for the purpose, started subjects to him to which he was quite unaccustomed, wherein I found he had so clear an insight, so quick an apprehension, and so solid a judgment, that one would have thought he had never been practised in any thing but arms, and affairs of state. These endowments of nature have such beauty and vigour :

————— *Quibus arte benignâ,  
Et melior luto finxit præcordia Titan.\* i. e.*  
The sun having of clay much more refin'd,  
With greater accuracy form'd their mind :

that they keep their ground in defiance of a bad education. But it is not enough that our education does not spoil us, it is necessary that it should alter us for the better.

Know-  
ledge ought  
to be ac-  
companied  
with judg-  
ment.

There are some of our parliaments, which, when they are to admit any officers, examine only into their learning; others also add the trial of their understanding, by asking their judgment of some law-case. The latter seem to me to proceed in the best

\* Juv. Sat. xiv. ver. 34, 35

method. And though both are absolutely necessary, and it is requisite that they should be defective in neither, yet, in truth, judgment is to be preferred to science, the former of which may make shift without the latter, but not the latter without the former: for, as the Greek verse says,

Ὡς ἔστιν ἡ ἀθροὺς ἢ μὴ νῦν παρῇ. i. e.

Learning is useless, without wit and sense.

Would to God that, for the sake of justice, our courts of judicature were as well furnished with understanding and conscience as they are with knowledge. *Non vitæ sed scholæ, dicimus*, says Seneca;\* we do not study to live, but to dispute. Now learning is not to be made a mere appendix to the mind, but to be incorporated with it: it must not only be tinged with it, but thoroughly dyed; and if it does not change and meliorate its imperfect state, it were, without question, better to let it alone:

A little learning is a dangerous thing,  
Drink deep, or taste not the Pierian spring:  
For shallow draughts intoxicate the brain,  
But drinking deeply sobers us again.

It is a dangerous weapon, and if in weak hands that know not how to use it, it will embarrass and hurt its master, *Ut fuerit melius non didicisse*,† so that it would have been better not to have learned at all. This perhaps is the cause, that neither we nor divinity require much learning in women; and that Francis, duke of Brittany, son of John V. when, in talking of his marriage with Isabel, the daughter of Scotland, he was told, that she was homely bred, and without any manner of learning, he made answer, “that he liked her the better for it; and “that a woman was learned enough, if she could “distinguish between her husband’s shirt and his “doublet.”

\* Ep. 106, in fine.

† Cicero Tusc. Quest. lib. ii. cap. 4.



Whether  
learning be  
absolutely  
necessary.

It is therefore no such great wonder, as they make of it, that our ancestors held learning in no great esteem, and that, even to this day, it is but seldom to be met with in the privy councils of our kings; and were it not for enriching ourselves (which is the only thing we propose now a-days, by the means of law, physic, pedantry, and even divinity itself), you would no doubt see it in as despicable a state as ever. What pity then would it be if it neither instructed us to think well, nor to do well? *Postquam docti prodierunt, boni desinunt.\** Since the appearance of learned men, good men are become scarce. All other knowledge is detrimental to him who has not the science of becoming a good man.

Every kind  
of genius is  
not capa-  
ble of be-  
ing made  
better by  
learning.

But may not the reason I touched upon just now also proceed from hence, that our study in France having, as it were, no other view but profit, few of those who are formed by nature for offices rather of dignity than gain, apply themselves to learning, or for so little a while (being taken from their studies before they have had a relish for them, to some profession which has nothing to do with books), that, generally speaking, there are none left to apply themselves wholly to study but people of mean education, who only study learning for a livelihood. And the minds of such people, being by nature, and domestic education and example, of the basest alloy, make a wrong use of learning. For it is not for knowledge to furnish light to a dark soul, nor to make a blind man see. Its business is not to find a man eyes, but to clear them, and to regulate a man's steps, provided he have good feet and legs of his own. Knowledge is an excellent drug, but no drug has virtue enough to preserve itself from corruption and decay, if the vessel into which it is put be not sound and sweet. A man may have a clear sight who looks a-squint, and consequently sees what is good, but does not follow it, and sees knowledge, but makes

\* Seneca, Epist. 95.

no use of it. Plato's principal institution in his republic, is to fit his subjects with employments suitable to their nature. Nature can do every thing, and does every thing. Cripples are not fit for exercises of the body, nor weak understandings for those of the mind. Philosophy is too sublime for degenerate and vulgar minds. When we see a shoemaker ill shod, we say it is no wonder. Thus, it seems, we often find, by experience, a physician worse doctored, a divine worse reformed, and consequently a scholar of less sufficiency than other men. Aristo of Chios had anciently reason to say,\* that philosophers did their auditors more harm than good, because most of them are not capable of receiving benefit by such instructions, on which they were too apt to put a bad interpretation; so that *ἀσώτως, ex Aristippi, acerbos ex Zenonis schola exire.*† i. e. That they went away debauchees from the school of Aristippus, and sour churls from that of Zeno.

In that excellent institution which Xenophon ascribes to the Persians, we find, that they taught their children virtue, as other nations instruct them in letters. Plato says,‡ that the eldest son in the royal succession was thus tutored. As soon as he was born, he was delivered, not to women, but to the eunuchs of the greatest authority about their kings for their virtue, whose charge it was to keep his body in health and good plight, and after he came to seven years of age, to teach him to ride, and to go a hunting. When he attained to fourteen, they transferred him into the hands of four the wisest, the most just, the most temperate, and the most valiant men of the nation. The first instructed him in religion, the second taught him to be always honest, the third to be the master of his appetites, and the fourth to despise all danger.

The Persians gave their children a virtuous, instead of a learned education.

\* Cic. de Nat. Deor. lib. iii. cap. 31.

† In the first Alcibiades, p. 32.

‡ Ibid.

The Lacedæmonian youth bred up to every thing but literature.

It is a thing worthy of very great consideration, that in that excellent, and, in truth, for its perfection, prodigious form of civil regimen, proposed by Lycurgus, though solicitous of the education of children, as a thing of the greatest concern, and even in the very seat of the muses, he should make so little mention of learning, as if their generous youth, disdaining any other yoke but that of virtue, ought to be furnished only with such masters as should instruct in valour, prudence, and justice, instead of being put under our masters of the sciences; an example which Plato has followed in his laws. The form of their discipline was, to propound questions to them upon the judgment of men and their actions; and if they commended or condemned either this or that person or fact, they were obliged to give their reason for so doing; by which means they at once sharpened their understanding, and became skilful in the law. Astyages in Xenophon,\* having demanded of Cyrus an account of his last lesson, he made this answer, viz. "A tall boy in our school, having a cassock too short, took another by force, from one of his companions who was not so tall, and gave him his own in exchange. Our master having made me judge of this dispute, I thought it best for both of them to keep the cassock he then had, for that each of them was better accommodated with the other's cassock than with his own. But my master told me I had given wrong judgment; for I had only considered the fitness of the garments, whereas I ought principally to have had regard to strict justice, which requires that no one should be deprived of his property by force." And young Cyrus added, that he was lashed for it, as we are in our villages, for forgetting the first aorist of *τυττά*. My pedagogue must make me a fine oration, in *genere demonstrativo*, before he can persuade me that his school is as good as that. They chose to shorten

\* Xenophon's Cyropædia, lib. i. cap. 3, sect. 14.

the way, and forasmuch as the sciences, when they are rightly pursued and applied, cannot but teach us prudence, fidelity, and resolution, they thought fit to initiate their children in the knowledge of the effects, and to instruct them, not by hearsay, but by the proof of the action, in vigorously forming and moulding them not only by words and precepts, but chiefly by works and examples, to the end that it might not only be a knowledge of the mind, but become constitutional and habitual, and not barely an acquisition, but a natural possession. Agesilaus, being asked for the purpose, "What he thought most proper for boys to learn?" replied, "What they ought to do when they come to be men." No wonder if such an institution produced such admirable effects.

It is said, they used to go to the other cities of Greece, in quest of rhetoricians, painters, and musicians; but to Lacedæmon for legislators, magistrates, and generals of armies; at Athens they learned to speak well; at Lacedæmon to act well; at Athens to get clear out of a sophistical argument, and to unravel ensnaring syllogisms; at Lacedæmon to escape the baits of pleasure, and with a noble courage to withstand the menaces of fortune and death. The Athenians cudgelled their brains about words, the Lacedæmonians about things; at Athens there was an eternal babble of the tongue, at Lacedæmon a continual exercise of the mind: therefore it is no wonder, that, when Antipater demanded fifty of their children for hostages, they made answer, quite contrary to what we should do, that they would rather give him twice the number of full grown men, such a value did they set upon their children's domestic education.\* When Agesilaus courted Xenophon to send his children to be bred up at Sparta, it was not that they should learn rhetoric there or logic, but to be instructed, he said, in the

The difference between the instruction given to the children of Sparta, and to those of Athens.

\* Plutarch in the notable sayings of the Lacedæmonians.

noblest of all sciences, viz. how to obey, and how to command.\*

How So-  
crates ban-  
tered a so-  
phist who  
had got no-  
thing at  
Sparta.

It is pleasant to see Socrates, after his manner, rallying Hippias, when he tells him what a sum of money he had got by teaching school, especially in certain little villages of Sicily, but that at Sparta he did not get one penny. What idiots are they, said Socrates,† who know nothing of mensuration nor numeration, and make no account either of grammar or poetry, and only amuse themselves in studying the succession of kings, the settlement and declension of states, and the like kind of stuff!‡ And, after all, Socrates having made him, from one step to another, acknowledge the excellency of their form of public administration, and the felicity and virtue of their private life, leaves him to guess what inference he draws from the inutility of his pedantic arts.

The sci-  
ences damp  
courage.

Examples have taught us, that in military affairs, and all others of that kind, the study of the sciences damps and enervates the courage of men rather than quickens and rouses it. The most potent empire, that appears to be at this day in the whole world, is that of the Turks, a people who have a great esteem for arms, and as hearty a contempt for literature. I find that Rome was more valiant before she grew so learned. The most warlike nations in our days are the most stupid, and the most ignorant; of which the Scythians, Parthians, and the great Tamerlane, may serve as a proof. When the Goths ravaged Greece, the only thing that preserved all the libraries from being burnt, was an opinion which one of their body possessed them with, that it was absolutely the best way to leave all that furniture entire in the enemy's hands, as it would tend to divert them from the exercise of arms, and incline them to a lazy and sedentary life. When our king, Charles VIII. as it

\* Plutarch in the Life of Agesilaus, cap. 7.

† Plato's Hippias Major, p. 96.

‡ Idem. p. 97.

were without drawing his sword, saw himself possessed of the kingdom of Naples, and of a great part of Tuscany, the nobility about him attributed this unexpected facility of conquest to this, that the princes and nobles of Italy studied more to render themselves ingenious and learned, than vigorous and warlike.

## CHAPTER XXV.

### *Of the Education of Children.*

*To Madame Diana de Foix, Countess de Gurson.*

I NEVER yet saw that father who would not own his son, were he ever so crooked or scabby; not that he is insensible of his defects, unless he be altogether intoxicated with affection, but still he is his child. So, for my own part, I perceive more clearly than any body, that these Essays of mine are but the idle whimsies of a man who only nibbled on the outward rind of the sciences in his nonage, and has only retained a vague and imperfect idea of them, a little smatch of every thing, and nothing thoroughly *à la mode de Française*. For I know, in general, that there is such a science as physic, a knowledge in the laws, four parts or branches of the mathematics, and have a gross idea of what all these aim at. Perhaps too, I know what the sciences contribute to that benefit of human life; but to dive farther than that, and to have bit my nails in the study of Aristotle, the monarch of all modern learning, or to have bent my study entirely to any one science, is what I never did, nor is there any one art, of which I can so much as draw the first lineaments; insomuch that there is not a school-boy of the lower classes, but may presume to say he is a better scholar than I am, who have not ability sufficient to examine him in his first

What was the amount of Montaigne's acquaintance with literature.

lesson : and if I am at any time forced upon it, I am constrained to put some general questions to him, wide from the point, upon which I try his natural judgment, a lesson as much unknown to him, as his is to me.

Plutarch  
and Seneca  
the favour-  
ite books of  
Montaigne.

I have not settled a correspondence with any books of solid learning but Plutarch and Seneca ; and from them, like the Danaides, I am continually filling and pouring out ; so that what I endeavour to make my own, is next a-kin to nothing. History is my favourite subject, or else poetry, which I am particularly fond of : for, as Cleanthes said, in the same manner as the voice strained through the narrow passage of a trumpet comes out stronger and shriller, just so, methinks, a sentence enforced by the numerous measures of poetry, is much more striking both to my ear and apprehension. As to the natural parts I have, of which this is a specimen, I find them to bow under the burden : my fancy and judgment do but grope in the dark, staggering, tripping, and stumbling ; and when I have gone as far as I can, I am by no means satisfied ; I see more land still before me, but so wrapped in clouds, that my dim sight cannot distinguish what it is. And as I take upon me to treat indifferently of whatever comes into my head, and therein trust entirely to my own natural talents, if I happen, as I often do, to find in good authors those very topics which I have attempted to write upon (as I did very lately in Plutarch's Discourse of the Strength of Imagination), to see myself so weak and insipid, so dull and sleepy in comparison of those writers, I either pity or despise myself. Yet it is some pleasure to me to find that my opinions have frequently the honour to tally with theirs, and that I follow in the same track, though at a great distance ; saying that they are in the right ; and I have this quality, which every one cannot boast of, of knowing the wide difference between them and me. Nevertheless, I give vent to my own sentiments, weak and flat as they are, without correct-

ing or supplying their faults and defects, which I have discovered by this comparison.

A man had need have a good strong back, to keep pace with these people. The indiscreet scribblers of our age, who foist into their worthless productions whole paragraphs from the ancient authors, to give themselves a reputation, act in a quite contrary manner; for the infinite dissimilitude of ornaments render the complexion of their own compositions so pale, sallow, and deformed, that they lose much more than they gain by it. The philosophers Chrysippus and Epicurus were in this respect of quite opposite humours; Chrysippus not only mixed passages out of other authors in his books, but entire pieces; and in one, the whole Medea of Euripides; which gave Apollodorus occasion to say,\* that were a man to pick out of his writings all that he had stolen from others, his paper would be a mere blank. Epicurus,† on the contrary, in 300 volumes that he has left behind him, has not so much as one quotation. I happened the other day to light upon a French book, in which, after I had been dragged a good while over a number of words, so lifeless, so bald, and so void of all substance and meaning, that, in truth, they were only French words; after a long and tedious travel, I met at last with a piece that was rich, sublime, and elevated to the very clouds, of which, had I found the declivity easy, or the ascent a little more accessible, it had been excusable: but it was so steep a precipice, and so detached from the rest of the work, that, by the six first words, I found myself flying into the other world, and, from thence, discovered the bog, from whence I came, so deep and low, that I had not the heart to descend down to it any more. If I were to stuff one of my discourses with such rich spoils as these, it would only the more expose the nakedness of the others. To find fault with others

Modern writers discover the poverty of their genius by pillaging the ancients.

\* Diogenes Laertius, in the Life of Chrysippus, lib. vii. sect. 181, 182.

† Idem, in the Life of Epicurus, lib. x. sect. 25.



for what I am guilty of myself, appears to me no more inconsistent than to condemn, as I often do, the faults of others in myself. They are to be ever reprov'd, and ought to have no sanctuary allowed them; yet I know how confidently I myself make bold at every turn, to set my style on a level with what I steal from other authors, and to make it keep pace with them, not without the rash presumption, that I shall be able so to impose on the judgment of my readers,\* and that they will not be able to discern the difference; but this is as much owing to my application, as to my invention and capacity. Besides, I do not wrestle with the whole body of those veteran heroes, nor with any one of them singly; it is only by gentle skirmishes that I engage them. I am not dogmatical but by their mettle, and do not engage so far as I make a show of doing: yet if I could hold them tack I were a brave fellow; for I never assault them on the weakest side. For a man to cover himself (as I have seen some do) with another's armour, so as not to let his fingers' ends be seen; to carry on his design (as it is easy for scholars to do in a common affair) under old inventions patched up, and then endeavour to conceal the plagiarism, and to make it pass for his own, is in the first place injustice and meanness of spirit in such men, who, having nothing of value of their own to recommend them, seek to graft a reputation entirely upon the stock of others. In the next place, it is ridiculous folly to content themselves with the ignorant approbation of the vulgar, by such a pitiful fraud, and be disparaged by men of understanding, the only persons whose praise is of any credit, who snuff with disdain at such borrowed patch-work. For my own part, there is nothing I would not rather do than that. I only speak of others that I may more expressly speak of myself, and be informed what conduct I ought to pursue in this

\* What Montaigne here says of himself is strictly true; of which a proof may be seen in the twenty-first chapter of this first book; and, upon occasion, I have given others as palpable.

point ; neither do I hereby in the least glance at the professed composers of centos,\* of which I have seen some who were very ingenious ; particularly one of the name of Capilupus,† besides others of greater antiquity.‡ These are wits, who manifest themselves to be such, both by that, and compositions of other kinds, as Lipsius, in that learned and laborious system of his politics.

Be this as it will, and how trifling soever these Essays of mine are, I will frankly own I never thought of concealing them, any more than my bald grizzled pate before them, where the graver has presented you not with a true face, but the resemblance of mine. For these also are but my own particular humours, and opinions ; and I deliver them as no other than what I myself believe, and not for what ought to be believed by others. I have no aim in this writing, but to lay myself open, who perhaps shall be of another mind to-morrow, if I am altered by fresh instruction. I have no authority to be believed, neither do I desire it, being conscious that I have

The judgment which Montaigne forms of his work.

\* This is a term given to a piece of poetry composed of verses, or the ends of verses, taken from one or more authors, to express any thing but the very thing that the verses signify in the authors from whence they have been borrowed.

† Lelius Capilupus, a native of Mantua, who flourished in the sixteenth century, was famous for compositions of this kind, as may be seen under his name in Bayle's Dictionary, who says that the cento which he wrote against the monks, is inimitable ; it is to be found at the end of the *Regnum Papisticum* of Neogeorgas. He wrote one also against the women, which Mr. Bayle also mentions as a very ingenious piece, but too satirical. It was inserted in a collection entitled *Baudii Amores*, printed at Leyden in 1638. This Lelius had a nephew named Julius Capilupus, who signalized himself by centos, and even had a talent for it superior to his uncle, if we may believe Possevin. *Poet. Select. lib. 17, 24.* But let Montaigne, Bayle, and Possevin, say what they will, it is a happiness for learning that compositions of this sort, the style of which cannot but be full of expressions, harsh, improper, and dogmatical, are neglected.

‡ As the centos of Ausonius, composed wholly out of the verses of Virgil.

not been instructed well enough myself to teach another.

His opinion concerning the education of children.

A friend of mine, therefore, having read the foregoing chapter the other day, told me at my own house, that I should have enlarged a little more on the education of children. Now, madam, if I have a talent equal to the task, I could not employ it better than to devote it to the little gentleman, who is like, ere long, to be the happy issue of your body (you being of too good blood to begin otherwise than with a male). For having had so great a hand in your marriage treaty, I have a certain right and interest in the grandeur and prosperity of the issue that shall spring from it; besides that the long claim you have had to my service, sufficiently obliged me to wish honour and happiness to all that you have a value for. But, in truth, what I mean by it is this; that the thing of the greatest difficulty and importance to human science, is the nurture and education of children. As in agriculture, the methods to be taken before planting are, as well as the planting itself, certain and easy, but after that which is planted comes to take root and shoot up, there is a great deal of trouble and difficulty in raising it; so it is with the human race.\* The getting of children requires no great industry; but after they born, then begins the trouble, anxiety, and care of training and bringing them up.

The great difficulty of guessing by the first actions of children what they will be hereafter.

The display of their inclinations is so faint and so obscure at this tender age, and what they seem to promise is so uncertain and fallacious, that it is extremely difficult to form any solid judgment of them; as Cimon, Themistocles, and a thousand others, who have become very different men from what people

\* This, which seems so natural a sentiment, is taken from one of Plato's Dialogues, entitled Theages, where a father applying with his son to Socrates, to consult him to whom he should put his son for education, made the very same remark as Montaigne has in this place. See Plato in Theages, p. 88, printed at Frankfort, 4to, 1602.

expected. Cubs of bears, and puppy-dogs, make a full discovery of their natural inclinations; but men, as soon as grown up, applying themselves to certain usages, opinions, and laws, easily alter, or at least disguise, their real inclinations. And yet it is difficult to force natural propensity; whence it comes to pass, that, for want of having chosen the right course, a man often takes very great pains, and spends great part of his life in training up children to things for which they are altogether unfit. In this difficulty, nevertheless, I am clearly of opinion, that they ought to be initiated in the best and most profitable studies, and that little heed ought to be given to those slight presages and prognostications which we happen to conceive of them in their tender years, on which Plato, in his Republic, seems, methinks, to lay too much stress.

As for learning, it is certainly, madam, a great Of what advantage learning is. ornament, and a qualification of wonderful service, especially to persons raised to such a degree of fortune as your ladyship. But it has not its proper use in persons of mean and low circumstances, it being more forward to assist in the carrying on of war, in the government of people, and in negotiating alliances with a foreign prince or nation, than to form a syllogism in logic, to plead an appeal, or to prescribe a dose of physic. Wherefore, madam, believing you will not omit this so necessary an article in the education of your descendants, as you yourself have tasted the sweets of it, and are of learned extraction (for we still have the writings of the ancient counts de Foix, from whom both the count your husband and you are descended; and M. de Candale, your uncle, every day obliges the world with others, which will extend the knowledge of this quality in your family to many succeeding ages), I will, upon this occasion, mention a particular fancy of my own, contrary to the common practice, and this is all that I am able to contribute for your ladyship's service in this particular.

The success  
of a child's  
education  
depends on  
the choice  
of a gover-  
nor,

The charge of the governor you shall appoint for your son, upon the choice of whom the success of his education entirely depends, consists of several branches, which I shall not touch upon, as being unable to add any thing valuable to them; and as to that on which I take upon me to give him my advice, he may follow it so far, and no farther, than he thinks it plausible or rational. For a boy of quality, then, who covets learning not for gain (for so mean a view as that is unworthy of the grace and favour of the Muses, besides that it has a foreign regard and dependence), nor so much for the profit of others as for his own, and to furnish and enrich himself within, having rather a desire to turn out a man of abilities than a mere scholar, I would advise his friends to be careful of choosing him a tutor who is a man of a good head-piece, rather than a perfect book-worm, though both judgment and learning are requisite, but manners and understanding rather than science; and that his tutor should perform this office in a new method.

The tutor of  
a lad ought  
to make  
him speak  
sometimes  
before, and  
sometimes  
after him.

The custom of tutors is, to be continually thundering in their pupils' ears, as if they were pouring into a funnel, and our task is only to repeat what they have said to us before. I would have the tutor to correct this fault, and that, at the very first, he should, according to the capacity of the lad he has to manage, begin to put it to the test, by permitting his pupil himself to taste things, and to choose and distinguish them, sometimes opening the way for him, and sometimes not. What I mean is, that he should not invent and speak all himself, but that he should also hear his pupil speak in turn. Socrates, and afterwards Arcésilaus, made their scholars speak first, and then they spoke to them; *Obest plerumque is qui discere volunt, autoritas eorum qui docent*.\* "The authority of those who teach, is very often a detriment to those who desire to learn." It is pro-

\* Cic. de Nat. Deorum, lib. i. cap. 5.

per that he should put him upon a trot, like a young horse, before him, that he may judge of his capacity, and how much he is to abate of his own pace, to accommodate himself to that of the other. For want of this due proportion we spoil all; and to know how to choose, and to keep within the exact measure, is one of the hardest tasks that I know. A man of a sublime genius, and strong parts, knows how, and when to form, indulge, or condescend to these puerile motions, and to guide them. I walk firmer and more secure up hill than down; and such as, according to our common way of teaching, undertake with one and the same lesson, and the same method of instruction, to manage several geniuses of such different sizes and capacities, no wonder if in a multitude of children there are scarce two or three to be met with, who are the better for their discipline. The tutor should not only examine him as to the words of his lesson, but as to their meaning and import; and should judge of the improvement he has made in his learning, not by the testimony of his memory, but by that of his conduct. Let him exhibit his lesson in a hundred views, and accommodate it to as many different subjects, in order to see if he yet rightly comprehend it, and is master of it, forming his progress by the model of those admirable institutions in the Dialogues of Plato. It is a sign of crudity and indigestion to disgorge any thing in the same form it was swallowed; and the stomach has not performed its office, if it has not altered the figure and shape of what was committed to it for concoction. So our minds take things upon trust, while they are constrained to follow other men's fancies. We have been so subjected to the trammel, that we have no free pace of our own; our vigour and liberty are extinct, *Nunquam tutelæ suæ fiunt*.\* "They are ever in wardship, and never enjoy their own." I had a private interview at

\* Senec. Ep. 33.

Pisa with an honest man, but so great an Aristotelian, that his general thesis was, "That the touchstone and standard of all solid imaginations, and of all truths, was their conformity to the doctrine of Aristotle; that all besides was vain and chimerical; for that he had seen all, and said all." This position, by being interpreted in too free and injurious a sense, brought and kept him a long time in great danger of the inquisition at Rome. Let the tutor make his pupil thoroughly sift every thing he reads, and lodge nothing in his fancy upon mere authority. Let the principles of Aristotle be no more principles to him than those of the Stoics or Epicureans, only let this diversity of opinions be laid before him; he will himself choose if he be able, if not, he will remain in doubt:

*Che non menche saper dubiar m'aggrada.\* i. e.*

There is sometimes a merit in doubting, as well as in knowing.

For if he embrace the opinions of Xenophon and Plato, by his own discourse, they will be no longer theirs, but his. He that follows another, follows nothing, finds nothing, nay does not seek for any thing. *Non sumus sub rege, sibi quisque se vindicet.*† "We are not under kingly government, let every man be at his own disposal." Let him at least know that he knows. It will be necessary that he imbibe their juices, but not that he would learn their maxims; and no matter if he forget from whence he derived them, provided he knows how to appropriate them to his own use. Truth and reason are common to all men, and are no more his who first declared them, than his who declared them afterward. It is no more according to Plato than according to me, since both he and I understand and perceive in the same manner. Bees suck the flowers here and there where they find them, but make their honey afterwards, which is all and purely their own,

\* Dante inferno, Canto 11, ver. 93.

† Seneca, Ep. 33.

and no longer thyme and marjoram. So will the pupil transform and blend the several fragments he borrowed from others, in order to compile a work that shall be altogether his own; that is to say, his judgment, his instruction, his labour, and study are to be wholly employed in forming such a work. He is not obliged to discover the sources from whence he had the least assistance, but only to produce what he himself has composed. Men that live upon pilage and mortgages, make a show of their buildings, and their purchases, but do not discover how and where they had the money. You do not see the fees taken by a member of the parliament (of Paris), but you see the alliances with which he has strengthened his family, and the honours he has obtained for his children. No man accounts to the public for his revenue, but every one publishes his purchases.

The end of study is to become better and wiser. <sup>What</sup> It is (said Epicharmus\*) the understanding that <sup>ought to be</sup> sees and hears; it is the understanding that <sup>the fruit of</sup> turns every thing to advantage, that orders every thing, and that acts, rules, and reigns. All other things are blind, deaf, and lifeless. But certainly we render it timorous and cowardly, in not allowing it the liberty to do any thing of itself. Who ever asked his pupil what he thought of rhetoric and grammar, or of such and such a sentence of Cicero! They are stuck full-feathered into our memory, like oracles, of which the letters and the syllables are of the substance of the thing. To know by rote, is no knowledge; it is only a retention of what is entrusted to the memory. That which a man truly knows may be disposed of without regard to the author, or reference to the book from whence he had it. A stock of mere bookish learning is a sad stock indeed! I

\* It is the general opinion of the learned, that Epicharmus had this passage in a book which he wrote upon the nature of things, of which there are only some fragments left. We find it also in the *Stromates* of Clement Alexandrin. lib. ii. in Plutarch, de Solertia Animalium, p. 961, printed at Paris in 1628, and in other books.



grant that it may serve for an ornament, but not for a foundation, according to the opinion of Plato, who says, that true philosophy is compounded of constancy, faith, and sincerity, and that the other sciences, that are directed to other views, are only counterfeits. I could wish that Paluel or Pompey, those famous dancing-masters of my time, could have taught us to cut capers by only seeing them do it, without ever stirring from our seats, as these men pretend to improve our understanding, without exercising it; or that we had learned to ride, handle a pike, touch a lute, or sing, without the trouble of practice, as these pretend to make us think and speak well, without exercising either our judgment or voice. Now, while we are learning, whatsoever presents itself before us is a book sufficient; the un-luckiness of a page, the blunder of a footman, or table-talk, are so many new subjects.

The utility  
of travel-  
ling to a  
young gen-  
tleman.

For this reason, an acquaintance with the world, and visiting foreign countries, is of wonderful service, not to bring back, as most of our noblesse do, an account of how many paces Santa Rotunda is in compass, or of the richness of Signiora Livia's linen drawers; or, as some others, how much Nero's face in a statue, in such an old ruin, is longer or broader than that stamped on some medal; but to be able chiefly to give an account of the humours and customs of those nations which they have visited, and that we may polish our wits by rubbing them upon those of others.

When a  
young gen-  
tleman  
should be-  
gin his tra-  
vels.

I would have a lad sent abroad very young, and (principally, in order to kill two birds with one stone) into those neighbouring nations whose language is most different from our own, and to which, if it be not formed betimes, the tongue cannot bend. It is also an opinion universally received, "That a child should not be brought up in his mother's lap." The natural affection of parents makes even the discreetest of them all so overfond, that they cannot find in their hearts either to chastise them for their

faults, nor can they bear to see them suffer hardships and hazards, which they ought to be brought up in. They could not endure to see them come home from their exercises all in dust and sweat, to drink cold water when they are hot, nor to see them mount an unruly horse, or to fight with sword and pistol; and yet there is no remedy; for it is certain, that whoever hopes to make a lad turn out a brave man, must by no means spare him in his youth, and must often transgress the rules of physic:

*Vitamque sub dio, et trepides agat  
In rebus.\**

He must sharp cold and scorching heat despise,  
Defying danger where most danger lies.

Neither is it enough to inspire him with courage, but care must be taken also to give him strength of muscles. The soul will be too much oppressed if not seconded by the body, and would have too hard a task to discharge two offices alone. I know, to my sorrow, how much mine groans under the burden, being accommodated with a body so tender and delicate, as to bear upon it too hard; and often perceive in my reading, that our masters, in their writings, make examples pass for those of magnanimity and courage, which they should rather ascribe to the thickness of the skin, and the hardness of the bones; for I have seen men, women, and children so formed by nature, that they could bear a bastinadoing better than I could a fillip of a finger; and that, when they were soundly drubbed, would neither cry out, nor wince. Thus, when wrestlers imitate the philosophers in patience, it is owing rather to their strong sinews, than to their stout hearts. Now to be inured to undergo labour, is to be accustomed to endure grief. *Labor callum obducit dolori.*† “Labour hardens us to bear grief, by making it callous.” A boy is to be broke to the toil by severity of ex-

\* Horat. lib. iii. Ode ii. ver. 5, 6.

† Cic. Tusc. Quest. lib. ii. cap. 15.

ercises, in order to fit him for bearing the pain and smart of dislocations, colics, caustics, and even of imprisonment and torture; for it may be his misfortune to be exposed even to the worst of these, which, according as times are, may be the lot of the good as well as of the bad. Of this we are a proof. Whoever fights against the laws, threatens all honest men with the lash and halter. And, moreover, by the young man's being kept at home, the authority of his governor over him, which ought to be sovereign, is interrupted and checked by the presence of the parents. Add to this, that the respect paid him by the family, and his consideration of the greatness he is heir to, are, in my opinion, no small inconveniences at that age.

Modesty  
very necessary  
to  
youth.

While we thus learn to converse with mankind, I have often observed this vice, that instead of taking due hints from others, we only make it our business to lay ourselves open to them, and are at more pains to exhibit our own stock, than to lay in new. Silence and modesty are very advantageous qualities in conversation. The lad therefore should be taught not to be too profuse of the talent which he has acquired, and not to take exceptions at every silly story that is told in his hearing; for it is rudeness to carp at every thing that is not agreeable to our taste. Let him think it sufficient to conceal himself, and not seem to reproach another for not doing that which he refuses to do himself, nor act counter to the common customs. *Licet sapere sine pompa, sine invidia*.\* Let him be wise without ostentation, or contracting envy. Let him avoid that unpolite mimicking of authority, and that puerile ambition of appearing more refined, to be thought otherwise than he really is, and as if reproofs and interruptions, though so disagreeable, were not to be omitted, with a view of deriving from thence some singular reputation. As it is the sole prerogative of great poets to make use

\* Senec. Epist. 103.

of the *poetica licentia*, so it is intolerable that any but sublime and celebrated genuises should be privileged above the authority of custom. *Si quid Socrates et Aristippus contra morem et consuetudinem fecerunt, idem sibi ne arbitratur licere: magis enim illi, et divinis bonis hanc licentiam assequebantur.\**

"If Socrates and Aristippus transgressed the rules of custom, let him not imagine that he may take the same liberty, for their great and sublime virtues rendered that sort of privilege excusable in them." He should be taught never to enter into conversation or controversy, but where he meets with an antagonist worthy of engaging; and, even with such, not to make use of all the sophistry that may be of service to him, but only such turns as may be of most use to him upon the occasion. Let him be charged to be nice in the choice of his arguments, to abominate impertinence, and consequently to affect conciseness. Above all, let him be instructed to acquiesce, and submit to truth, as soon as ever he shall be convinced of it, whether by his opponent's arguments, or upon better consideration of his own; for he should never be preferred to the chair for muttering a set form of words, nor engaged in any cause which he does not approve. *Neque ut omnia, quæ præscripta et imperata sint, defendat, necessitate ulla cogitur:†* "Neither is he obliged, by any sort of necessity, to defend every thing that is prescribed or enjoined to him."

If the governor be of my humour, he will form his pupil to be a very loyal subject to his prince, very affectionate to his person, and very courageous in quarrel; but, withal, he will damp any ambition he may have to attach himself to his service by any other engagement than public duty. For besides many other inconveniences that are injurious to our liberty, a man's judgment being prepossessed by these parti-

They ought to be well affected to the sovereign, without being attached to him by employment at court.

\* Cic. de Offic. lib. i. cap. 41.

† Cic. Acad. Quæst. lib. iv. cap. 8.

cular obligations, is either divided and cramped, or is stained with indiscretion and ingratitude. A man, that is a perfect courtier, can neither have the power nor the will to speak and think otherwise than favourably of a master, who, out of so many thousands of his subjects, has singled him to maintain and prefer with his own hands. This favour, and the benefit flowing from it, must needs, and not without some reason, spoil his freedom of speaking, and cast a mist before his eyes: and we commonly find the language of such people, quite different from that of others of the same nation, and that it does not deserve much credit, when it treats of affairs relating to the court and the prince.

A lad must be inspired with sincerity.

Let his conscience and his virtue be conspicuous in his discourse, and have reason only for their guide. Make him understand that his own confession of any mistake, which he may discover in what he says, though none perceive it but himself, is an effect of judgment and sincerity, which are the principal qualifications he aims at; that obstinacy and wrangling are common qualities, which are most to be discovered in sordid souls. That to recollect and correct himself, and to give up a bad cause in the warmth of his dispute, are great and uncommon philosophical qualities.

He must be admonished when in company, to be attentive to every thing said or done.

He must be advised, when he is in company, to have his eye in every corner of the room; for I find that the chief seats are commonly taken by men of the least capacity, and that the greatest fortunes are not always accompanied with abilities. I have been present where, while those at the upper end of a table have been admiring the beauty of the tapestry, or commending the flavour of the sack, they have lost many fine things said at the lower end of it. Let him sift every man's talent: from a herdsman, a mason, or a passenger, a man may pick out something of what every one deals in, to treasure in his memory; and even the folly and weakness of others will contribute to his instruction. By a close obser-

vation of the graces and fashions of all he sees, he will create to himself an emulation of the good, and contempt of bad men.

Let an honest curiosity be suggested to his fancy of being inquisitive after every thing; and whatever is rare and singular in his neighbourhood, let him see it; be it a structure, a fountain, or a remarkable man, the field of a battle fought in ancient days, the expedition of Cæsar, or Charlemain:

He ought to be inspired with a laudable curiosity.

*Quæ tellus sit lenta gelu, quæ putris ab æstu,  
Ventus in Italiam quis bene vela ferat.\**

What lands are frozen, what are parch'd, explore.  
And what wind blows on the Italian shore.

Let him inquire into the manners, revenues, and alliances of princes. Things that are very pleasant to learn, and as useful to know. In this acquaintance with mankind, I chiefly include those who live only in historical memoirs. He will, by the help of such histories, get acquainted with the great geniuses of the best ages. It is a vain study, I confess, for those who do not apply closely to it, but to those who do, it is a study of inestimable benefit, and the only one, as Plato reports, which the Lacedæmonians reserved to themselves. What profit will not the pupil gain in this respect, by reading the lives of Plutarch? But let his governor remember what is the true end of his lessons, and that he do not so much imprint in his pupil's memory, the date of the ruin of Carthage, as the manners of Hannibal and Scipio; nor so much what place Marcellus died at, as why it was unworthy of his duty that he should die there. Let him not take so much pains to teach him the narrative part of histories, as to form his judgment of them, which, in my opinion, is the thing that we apply ourselves to, with the most different measures. I have read a hundred things in Titus Livius, that has escaped the observation of others,

The great benefit he will reap from the study of history.

\* Propert. lib. iv. eleg. 3, v. 39, 40.

and Plutarch has read a hundred more there, besides what I was able to discover, or than perhaps that author ever inserted in his book. To some it is merely a grammar study; to others, the very anatomy of philosophy, by which the most abstruse parts of human nature are penetrated into. There are, in Plutarch, many long discourses well worthy of attention; for, in my opinion, he is the greatest master in that kind of writing; but there are a thousand particulars, which he has only glanced upon, where he only points with his fingers, which way we may go if we please; and he contents himself sometimes with only giving a hint, in the most delicate part of his discourses, from whence we are to pluck out what deserves the public consideration: for example, where he says,\* “That the inhabitants of Asia came to be vassals to one man, only because they were not able to pronounce the single syllable, no.” Which saying of his, gave matter and occasion to Boetius,† to write his tract of Voluntary Servitude, where he makes a whole discourse in examining the trivial action of a man’s life, or inquiring into a word that does not seem of importance enough to deserve it. It is a pity that men of understanding should so much affect brevity. No doubt that it is some advantage to their reputation, but we are losers by it.

\* In his Treatise of False Modesty, ch. vii. of Amyot’s Translation.

† This was Montaigne’s friend, of whom I shall have occasion to say more elsewhere. His name was Stephen Boetius, and he composed that Book of Voluntary Servitude, which is here mentioned by Montaigne, and of which we shall find him discoursing more particularly in the twenty-seventh chapter of this book, under the article of Friendship. One thing very surprising is, that in all the editions which I have consulted, instead of Boetius we read Bœotia, a country of Greece; and that in all those which have short marginal lemmas of what is contained in the pages, we are told, upon account of this passage in Plutarch, that this country of Greece voluntarily submitted to slavery; a fatal accident, which care has been taken to point out in the margin, by these words, which are by no means equivocal. “The voluntary slavery of the Bœotians.” Thus a very material confusion has arisen from a small error in typography.

Plutarch had rather we should applaud his judgment than his knowledge, and chose rather to leave us with an appetite than a surfeit. He knew that too much might be said even on good subjects; and that Alexandrides justly reproached him, who made very pertinent, but too long, speeches to the Ephori, by saying,\* "O stranger! thou speakest what thou oughtest to say, as to the matter of it, but not in the due manner." Such as have but little flesh on their bones, stuff themselves out with clothes; so they who have a scanty subject to treat of, swell it out with words.

The human understanding is wonderfully enlightened by conversing with the world; for we are of ourselves stupid, and short-sighted. One asking Socrates of what country he was, he did not make answer, "Of Athens," but, "Of the world."† He, who had the richest and the most extensive imagination, was fond of calling the whole world his country, and extended his acquaintance, society, and friendship to all mankind, not as we do, who look no farther than the ground we stand on. When the vines of the village where I live are nipped with the frost, our priest immediately infers, that the wrath of God is kindled against the human race, and judges that the Cannibals have already got the pip. To see our civil wars, who is there that does not cry out, that the machine of the world is turned topsy-turvy, and that the day of judgment is just at hand, without considering that many worse things have happened, and that for all this, people are very joyous in ten thousand other parts of this earth? For my part, considering the licentiousness and impunity of the times, I wonder that there is no more mischief done. To him who feels the hail-stones patter about his ears, the whole hemisphere appears to be in a storm

\* Plutarch in the notable sayings of the Lacedæmonians.

† Cic. Tusc. Quæst. lib. v. cap. 37, and Plutarch, in his Discourse on Banishment, cap. 4.



and tempest ; like the ridiculous Savoyard, who said very gravely, that, if that simple king of France could have managed his fortune well, he might in time have been steward of the household to his duke. The fellow, in his shallow imagination, could not conceive any grandeur superior to that of his master. In truth, we are all of us guilty of this error, an error of no small consequence and prejudice. But whoever represents to himself, as in a picture, that great image of our mother Nature, portrayed in her full majesty, whoever reads in her face so general and constant a variety, whoever observes himself in that figure, and not himself only, but a whole kingdom no bigger than the least point made by a pencil, in comparison of the whole, that man alone estimates things according to their true grandeur.

The world  
ought to be  
the young  
man's  
book.

This great world, which some do not scruple to multiply as several species under one genus, is the mirror in which we ought to view ourselves, in order to discover the true bias. In short, I would have this to be the book for my scholar to study ; for so many humours, sects, judgments, opinions, laws, and customs, teach us to judge solidly of our own, and inform our understanding how to discover its imperfection and natural infirmity, which is a lesson of no little importance. So many turns and revolutions of state, and the fortune of the public, will teach us to make no great wonder at our own. So many great names, so many victories and conquests buried in oblivion, render our hopes ridiculous of eternalizing our fame, by the taking of half a score light horsemen and a paltry turret, which had never been heard of, if it had not been demolished. The pride and arrogance of so many foreign pomps and ceremonies, the conceited majesty of so many courts, and so much grandeur, inure and strengthen our sight to behold the lustre of our own, without dazzling our eyes. So many millions of men buried before us, encourage us not to fear the going to join such good

company in the other world; and so of every thing else. Pythagoras used to say,\* That our life makes a retreat to the great and populous assemblies of the Olympic games, wherein some exercise the body in order to acquire the glory of winning the prize, and others carry merchandise to sell for profit. There are some (and those none of the worst) who propose no other advantage than only to look on, and consider, how and why every thing is done; and to be spectators of the lives of other men, in order thereby to judge and regulate their own.

By examples might properly be taught the most profitable discourses of philosophy, by which all human actions ought to be regulated and directed. He should be instructed

The science of behaving well in life ought to be early inculcated in the minds of children.

——— *Quid fas optare, quid asper  
Utile nummus habet, patriæ charisque propinquis  
Quantum elargiri deceat; quem te Deus esse  
Jussit, et humana qua parte locatus es in re,†  
Quid sumus, aut quidnam victuri gignimur.‡*

What man may wish, what's money's proper use,  
What are our country's, and our neighbour's dues;  
What God commands an honest man to be,  
And here on earth to know in what degree  
God has him plac'd, and what we are, and why  
He gave us being and humanity.

what knowledge is, and what it is to be ignorant; what ought to be the aim of study; what valour, temperance, and justice are; the difference between ambition and avarice, servitude and subordination, licentiousness and liberty; the marks whereby to know what is true and solid contentment; how far death, sorrow, and disgrace may be dreaded:

*Et quo quemque modo fugiatque feratque laborem.§*

How labour to avoid, or how sustain.

By what springs we move, and the reason of our va-

\* Cic. Tusc. Quæst. lib. v. cap. 3.

† Pers. Sat. iii. v. 69.

‡ Montaigne has put this verse last, which in Persius goes before the others, and is the 67th.

§ Virg. Æneid. lib. iii. ver. 459.

rious inclinations. For, methinks, the first lessons with which the youth's understanding ought to be seasoned, should be such as regulate his manners and his sense, which will instruct him to know himself, and how to live well, and die well. Among the liberal sciences, let us begin with that which makes us free,\* though they all conduce, in some degree, to the instruction and use of life, as all other things also do in some respect or other; but let us choose that which directly and professedly serves to that end. Were we once able to restrain our appetites within their just and natural limits, we should find that the greater part of the sciences would be useless to us, and that, even in such as are most essential, there are many very unnecessary breadths and depths which we were better to let alone, and, according to the direction of Socrates,† limit the course of our studies to those things which are of real advantage;

———— *Sapere aude!*

*Incipe: vivendi qui recte prorogat horam,  
Rusticus expectat dum defuat amnis, at ille  
Labitur, et labetur in omne volubilis ævum.‡*

———— Dare to be wise; and now

Begin. The man who has it in his pow'r  
To practice virtue, and protracts the hour,  
Waits, like the clown, to see the brook run low,  
Which careless flows, and will for ever flow.

It is a great folly to teach our children

*Quid moveant Pisces, animosaque signa Leonis,  
Lotus, et Hesperia quid Capricornus aqua:§*

\* Unum studium vere liberale est quod liberum facit. Senec. Epist. 88.

† Diogenes Laertius in the Life of Socrates, lib. ii. sect. 21. Socrates primus philosophiam devocavit è cælo, et coegit de vita et moribus rebusque bonis et malis quærere. Cic. Tusc. Quæst. lib. v. cap. 4. i. e. "Socrates first called down philosophy from the heavens, and made life and manners, and good and evil, the objects of its inquiry."

‡ Hor. lib. i. Epist. 2, ver. 40 to 43.

§ Propert. lib. iv. eleg. 1, ver. 85, 86.

What influence Pisces, and fierce Leo have,  
Or Capricorn in the Hesperian wave.

the knowledge of the stars, and the motion of the eighth sphere before their own.

Τί πλεῖα δίσσιχα μοί  
Τί δ' ἀστράσι βοῶτιω.\*

From me, no star in heav'n's whole spangled train  
Or claims attention, or augments my pain.

Anaximenes said, in a letter to Pythagoras, "Why should I trouble myself in searching for the secrets of the stars, having death or slavery continually before my eyes?" For the kings of Persia were at that time preparing for a war against his country. In like manner every one ought to say, "Being assaulted, as I am, by ambition, avarice, temerity, and superstition, and having within me so many other enemies of life, shall I trouble myself about the revolutions in the world?" •

After he has been instructed in what will make him wiser and better, he may then be entertained with a view of logic, natural philosophy, geometry, rhetoric; and when his judgment is formed what science to choose, he will soon go through it. The way of instructing him ought to be sometimes by discourse, and at other times by reading. Sometimes his governor should put the author he judges most proper into his hands, and sometimes give him the marrow and substance of his treatise, rightly prepared for his more easy digestion: and if himself be not conversant enough in books, to select the many fine discourses they contain, in order to accomplish his aim, some man of learning may be associated with the governor, who, when occasion requires, may supply him with the stores that shall be necessary for him to distribute and dispense to his pupil. Who can doubt whether this way of teaching is more easy and natural than that of Gazæ, in which the

At what time a child ought to be instructed in the sciences.

\* Anacreon, ode xvii. ver. 10 and 11,

precepts are so harsh and intricate, and the terms so empty and unmeaning, that there is no hold to be taken of them, nothing to rouse the attention; whereas here the mind has somewhat to taste and feed upon. This fruit therefore is without comparison the best, and will be the soonest ripe.

Philoso-  
phy de-  
spised, even  
by men of  
sense, and  
why.

It is a thousand pities that things are come to such a pass in this age, that philosophy, even by men of understanding, is looked upon as a vain and fantastical name, a thing of no use and value, either in opinion or effect; and I think that sophistry is the cause of it all, by possessing its avenues. It is very wrong to represent it to youth as a thing inaccessible, and with such a frowning, grim, and terrible aspect. Who is it that has put this pale and hideous mask upon it? There is nothing more gay, airy, and frolicsome, nay, I had almost said, more wanton. It preaches nothing but feasting and jollity. A melancholy, thoughtful countenance is a sign that it does not reside there. Demetrius, the grammarian, finding a knot of philosophers sitting together in the temple of Delphos, said to them, "Either I am mistaken, or, by your cheerful and pleasant countenances, you are engaged in no very deep discourse." To which one of them, Heraclian, the magician, replied, "It is for such as puzzle themselves in seeking whether the future tense of the verb βάλλω, has a double λ, or that hunt after the derivation of the comparatives χείριον, βέλτιον, and the superlatives χείριστον, βέλτιστον, to knit their brows whilst discoursing of their science; but as to philosophical discourses, they always divert and cheer up those who attend to them, and never make them sour nor sad :

*Deprendas animi tormenta latentis in ægro  
Corpore, deprendas et gaudia : sumit utrumque  
Inde habitum facies.*†

\* Plutarch, of oracles that had ceased, ch. v.

† Juv. Sat. ix. ver. 18, 19.

When some important ill disturbs the soul,  
 How vainly silence would our grief control?  
 Not joy, nor sorrow, can be hid by art,  
 Our foreheads blab the secrets of our heart.

The mind of a philosopher is in such a sound state, that it will also contribute to the health of the body. Philosophy makes its ease and tranquillity shine so as to be discerned from without; it forms the external behaviour according to its own mould, and consequently arms the person who entertains it with a modest assurance, a brisk active deportment, and a contented, debonnair countenance. A constant cheerfulness is the surest sign of wisdom, whose state is like that of things in the regions above the moon, always serene. It is Baraco and Baralippton that render their disciples so dirty and smoky. It is not philosophy, of which they know nothing at all but by hearsay. It is this that undertakes to calm the tempests of the soul, and to make hunger and thirst smile; and this it does not by certain imaginary epicycles, but by natural and palpable arguments.

Joy and  
 serenity of  
 mind the  
 marks of  
 wisdom,

It has virtue for its aim, which is not, as the schoolmen say, situate upon the summit of a steep, rugged, and inaccessible hill; for such as have approached it, have found it, on the contrary, to be seated in a fair, fruitful, and flourishing plain, from whence it has a clear view of all things below, to which place any one however may arrive, if he knows the best way, through shady, verdant, and sweetly flourishing walks, by a pleasant and gentle descent, like that of the celestial arches. For want of having frequented this supreme, beautiful, equally delightful and courageous virtue, this professed and implacable enemy to animosity, vexation, fear, and constraint, whose guide is nature, and whose companions are happiness and pleasure, they have, in the weakness of their imagination, created this silly, melancholy, quarrelsome, spiteful, menacing, quaint image of it, and placed it on a solitary rock amongst

Virtue, its  
 true cha-  
 racter and  
 residence.

thorns and briars, as a hobgoblin to scare people from it.

Virtue ought to be represented to youth as a thousand times more available than vice.

But the governor that I would have, I mean such a one as knows it to be his duty to possess his pupil with as much, or more, affection than reverence for virtue, will be able to inform him, that the poets have ever more accommodated themselves to the taste of the public, and will make him sensible, that the gods have placed sweat and toil in the cabinets of Venus rather than in those of Minerva. And when he begins to be sensible of it, by representing to him a Bradamanta, or an Angelica,\* for a mistress to dally with, a natural, active, generous, a masculine, a manly beauty, in comparison of a soft, affected, delicate, artificial beauty; the one dignified in the dress of a hero, crowned with a glittering helmet, the other adorned like a minx with pearls; he will then judge his affection to be masculine, if he shall choose quite contrary to that effeminate shepherd of Phrygia.

As easy to be acquired, and as the source of true pleasure.

Such a tutor will teach him, that the value and sublimity of true virtue consists in the facility, utility, and pleasure of exercising it; so far from being difficult, that boys as well as men, the most simple as well as the cunning, may attain to it, and not by force, but by rule. Socrates, its chief favourite, totally quits forcible methods, to slip into the more natural facility of its own progress. It is the nursing mother of all human pleasures, which, by rendering them just, makes them pure and safe, by moderating them keeps in breath and appetite, and like a kind mother, allows in abundance all those which nature requires, even to satiety, if not to lassitude, unless, perhaps, we choose to say, that the regimen which prevents the toper from being drunk, the glutton from being surfeited, the whore-master from being p-xed, is an enemy to our pleasures.

\* Two heroines in Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso*.

If the virtuous man has not the common share of fortune, he does without it, and frames himself another altogether his own, not more fickle and unsteady. <sup>The true employment of</sup> Virtue knows how to be rich, and powerful, and learned, and to lie upon perfumed quilts. It loves life, beauty, health, and honour, but its proper and peculiar office is to know how to use those blessings regularly, and how to part with them without concern; an office much more noble than troublesome, the whole course of a man's life being, without it, unnatural, turbulent, and unseemly. If the pupil shall happen to be of so different a disposition, that he had rather hear a fable than a narrative of a fine voyage, or some wise discourse which he understands; if at the beat of a drum, which excites the youthful ardour of his companions, he turns off to another, who calls him to see a puppet-show, or the tricks of a merry Andrew; if he does not wish, and think it more pleasant and delightful, to return all over dust victorious from a battle, than from the play of tennis or foot-ball with the prize of those exercises; I see no other remedy, but that he be put apprentice to a pastry-cook in some good town, though he were the son of a duke, according to Plato's receipt, "That children are to be placed out, and disposed of, not according to the wealth or rank of the father, but according to their own genius or capacity."

Since philosophy is that which instructs us to live, <sup>Philosophy ought to be taught to children.</sup> and that it has a lesson for infancy as well as other ages, why are not children sooner initiated into it:

*Udum et molle lutum est, nunc, nunc properandus, et acri  
Fingendus sine fine rota.\**

The clay is moist, and soft; now, now make haste,  
And form the vessel, for the wheel turns fast.

We are taught to live when we are going out of the world, A hundred scholars have had the p-x before

\* Pers. Sat. iii. ver. 23, 24.



they came to read Aristotle's lectures on temperance. Cicero said, that were he to live over the same number of years he had seen, he should never find time to read the Lyric poets in the same manner as he had the books that treated of logic.\* And yet I find these cavilling sophisters still more unprofitable. The child we are to train up has a great deal less time to spare. As he ought to be under a pedagogue for the first fifteen or sixteen years of his life, the remainder of it should be spent in action. Let us therefore employ so short a space of time in the instructions that are necessary. Away with the crabbed subtleties of logic; they are abuses by which our lives can never be amended; take the plain discourses of philosophy; learn to choose and rightly to apply them; they are more easy to be understood than one of Boccace's novels: a child, just come from its nurse, is much more capable of comprehending such plain philosophy, than of learning to read or write. Philosophy has discourses as proper for the rising generation, as for old age.

Aristotle's  
method in  
the instruction  
of Alexander  
the Great.

I am of Plutarch's opinion, that Aristotle did not so much trouble his great disciple with the knack of forming syllogisms, or with the elements of geometry, as in furnishing him with good precepts concerning valour, magnanimity, temperance, and the contempt of fear; and, with this ammunition, sent him, whilst he was but a boy, with no more than 30,000 foot, 4000 horse, and 42,000 crowns, to conquer the world. As for the other arts and sciences, Alexander, he said, honoured them much, and commended their excellency, but was not so much delighted with them, as to be tempted with a desire of reducing them to practice:

— *Petite hinc, juvenesque senesque,  
Finem animo certum, miserisque viatica canis.*†

\* This is taken entirely from Seneca, Epist. 49.

† Pers. Sat. v. ver. 64, 65.

May to this lesson young and old attend,  
And form their minds to some sure aim and end,  
Which in old age will solid comfort send.

Just so Epicurus said, in the beginning of his letter to Meniceus,\* that neither the youngest should refuse to philosophise, nor the oldest grow weary of it. He that does otherwise, seems tacitly to infer, either that it is not yet time to live happily, or that the season for it is past. I would not, however, have the youth confined to his book as to a prison, nor abandoned to the peevishness and melancholy temper of a passionate schoolmaster. I would not have his spirits broke by being tormented and used as some are, like pack-horses, fourteen or fifteen hours a-day. Neither should I think it proper, when, by reason of a solitary and melancholy disposition, he appears to be immoderately studious of books, that he should be indulged in that humour, because it renders him unfit for civil conversation, and diverts him from better employments. How many men have I seen, in my time, totally brutified by an intemperate thirst after knowledge! Carneades was so besotted with it, that he did not give himself time so much as to comb his head, or pare his nails.† Neither would I have the generous temper of the pupil spoiled by the incivility or barbarity of that of another. The French wisdom has been anciently proverbial, for a wisdom that sprouted out early, but soon faded. Indeed, we still see there are none so hopeful as the little children of France, but they commonly disappoint the expectation that has been formed of them, and when they are grown up to be men are eminent for nothing. I have heard men of good understanding say, that the colleges they are sent to, of which there are abundance, make them such blockheads.

As to our young gentleman, a closet, a garden, Philosophy, the formatrix of  
the table, his bed, and company, morning and even-

\* Diog. Laert, lib. x. sect. 122.

† Diogenes Laertius in the life of Carneades, lib. i. sect. 62.

manners, is ing, all hours should be the same, and all places  
no where alike serve for his study ; for philosophy, which, as  
inactive, the improver of his judgment and manners, should  
be his principal lesson, is active every where. The  
orator Isocrates, being intreated, at a feast, to dis-  
course of his art, all the company thought he gave  
a right answer, when he said,\* It is not now a time  
to do what I can do, and that which is now the time  
to do, I cannot do. For to make harangues or rhe-  
torical dissertations in a company met together to laugh  
and make good cheer, would have rendered it a very  
disagreeable medley. But as to philosophy, that part  
of it especially which treats of man, and of his offices  
and duties, it has been the common opinion of all wise  
men,† that, for the relish of conversation, it ought  
not to be banished from sports and entertainments.  
And Plato, having invited philosophy to be a guest  
at his banquet, we find in how gentle a manner, ac-  
commodated both to time and place, he entertained  
the company, though in a discourse of the sublimest  
and the most salutary nature :

*Æquè pauperibus prodest, locupletibus æquè,  
Æquè neglectum pueris senibusque nocebit.†*

Whose precepts rich and poor alike engage,  
But, if neglected, hurt both youth and age.

By this method of instruction the pupil will not  
have so much idle time upon his hands as others.  
But as walking to and fro in a gallery, though the  
steps be three times as many, does not tire us so  
much as when we walk the same number of paces in  
a journey, so our lesson, falling accidentally into our  
way, without any obligation of time and place, and  
mixing itself in all our actions, will insinuate itself  
insensibly.

The exer- Even exercises and recreations ought to constitute  
cise of the a great part of study, such as running, wrestling,  
body, and music, dancing, hunting, riding, and fencing. I  
an external

\* Plutarch, in his Table Talk, lib. i. q. 1.

† Idem, ib.

‡ Hor. lib. i. epist. 1, ver. 25, 26.

would have care taken of his external deportment and mein, and of the setting off his person at the same time with his mind. It is not a soul nor a body alone that we are training up, but a man; and we ought not to divide him into two parts. As Plato says, the one is not to be trained up without the other, but they must be made to draw together like a pair of horses harnessed to the same carriage. If we attend to him, does he not seem to require more time and care for the exercises of the body, and to think that the mind exercises itself too at the same time?

As to the rest, this method of education ought to be mildly conducted, not like our modern pedagogues, who, instead of alluring children to their learning, correct, or at least frighten them with nothing but rods and ferulas, horror and cruelty. Away with this force! this violence! there is nothing, in my opinion, so much discourages and stupifies a lad of a good disposition. If you desire that he should be afraid of shame and chastisement, do not harden him to them. Inure him, as much as you will, to sweat and cold, to wind and sun, and to dangers that he ought to despise. Wean him from all effeminacy and delicacy in clothes and bedding, in eating and in drinking. Use him to every thing that he may not be a rake and a fop, but a hale, strong lad. I was ever of this opinion from a child, and think so still. But, amongst other things, I never liked the management in most of our colleges, whose error, perhaps, might not have been so mischievous, if they had inclined to the indulgent side. They are really so many cages in which youth are shut up as prisoners, who are therein taught to be debauched, by being punished before they become so. Do but go thither just as their exercises are over, you hear nothing but the cries of children under the smart of correction, and the bellowing noise of the masters raging with passion. How can such tender, timorous souls be tempted to love their lesson by those ruby-faced guides, with wrath in their aspects, and the scourge

decorum, ought to be a great part of this education.

Children ought not to be compelled to study by severity.

in their hands? A wicked and pernicious form of proceeding! How much more decent would it be to see the forms on which the boys sit, strewed with flowers and green leaves, than with the bloody twigs of willows? I should choose to have the pictures of joy and gladness in the schools, together with Flora and the graces, as the philosopher Speusippus \* had in his; that where their profit is, there might be their pleasure. The viands that are wholesome for children ought to be sweetened with sugar, and those that are hurtful to them made as bitter as gall. It is wonderful to see how careful Plato is in his laws about the gaiety and pastimes of the youth of his city, and how he expatiates upon their races, games, songs, vaulting, and dancing, of which, he says, the ancients gave the conduct and patronage to the gods Apollo and Minerva, and to the Muses. He lays down not less than a thousand rules for his exercises; but as to the lettered sciences he insists very little upon them, and seems to recommend poetry in particular only for the sake of the music.

Every  
strange sin-  
gularity of  
humour  
must be  
corrected.

All oddness and singularity in our manners and conditions ought to be avoided, as an enemy to society. Who would not be astonished to hear that Demophoon, steward to Alexander, sweated in the shade, and shivered in the sun? † I have seen persons that have run faster from the smell of apples than from gunshot; others that have been frightened at a mouse; others that vomited at the sight of cream, and some that have done the like at the making of a feather-bed, as Germanicus, who could not bear the sight nor the crowing of a cock. I will not deny but, perhaps, there may have been some occult cause of this aversion; but, I think, if it was applied to in time, it might be extinguished. Instruction has so prevailed in this respect upon me (though not without some care upon my part), that, beer ex-

\* Diogenes Laertius, in the life of Speusippus, lib. iv. sect. 1.

† Sextus Empyricus Pyrrh. Hypot. lib. i. cap. 14, p. 17.

cepted, my appetite is reconciled to all eatables indifferently.

While the bodies of youth are supple, they ought to be bent to all fashions and customs; and provided the appetite and the will can be kept within due bounds, a young man may be safely rendered fit for all nations and companies, even to irregularity and excess, if need be, that is in compliance to custom. Let him be able to do every thing, but love to do nothing that is not good. Even the philosophers do not commend Calisthenes for losing the favour of his master, Alexander the Great, by refusing to drink with him glass for glass. Let the pupil laugh, play, and carouse with his prince; nay, I would have him in such debauches to be too hard for his companions in ability and vigour, and that he may not forbear doing mischief, either for want of strength, or of knowledge how to do it, but for want of the will. *Multum interest, utrum peccare quis nolit, aut nesciat.\** "There is a wide difference betwixt "refusing to do evil, and not knowing how to do "it." I thought I passed a compliment upon a nobleman as free from these excesses as any man in France, by asking him before a great deal of very good company, how often he got drunk in Germany for the sake of managing the king's business there? He took the compliment as it was really intended, and made answer, three times; of which, withal, he gave us the particular history. I know some, who, for want of this faculty, have been at a great loss in negotiating with that nation. I have often, with great admiration, reflected upon the wonderful constitution of Alcibiades, who so easily could transform himself to such different manners, and customs, without prejudice to his health; one while outstripping the excessive expense and pomp of the Persians, and at other times the austerity and frugality of the

They ought to be habituated to all customs, so as to comply with them sometimes to excess.

\* Seneca, Epist. 90.

Lacedæmonians ; as reformed in Sparta, as voluptuous in Ionia :

*Omnis Aristippum decuit color, et status, et res.\**

Old Aristippus every dress became,  
In every state and circumstance the same,

I would have my pupil to be such a one,

— *Quem duplici panno patientia velat,*

*Mirabor, vitæ via si conversa decebit.*

*Personamque feret non inconcinnus utramque.†*

But that a man, whom patience taught to wear  
A coat that's patch'd, should ever learn to bear  
A change of life with decency and ease,  
May justly, I confess, our wonder raise ;  
Yet he in ev'ry character can please.

These are my lessons ; and he who puts them in practice will be a greater gainer than he who only knows them in theory. If you see him, you hear him ; if you hear him, you see him. God forbid, says one in Plato, that to philosophise should be only to learn many things, and to treat of the arts. *Hanc amplissimam omnium artium bene vivendi disciplinam, vita magis quam literis persequuti sunt.‡* “ It is “ rather by their living well, than their learning, “ that they have devoted themselves to the most “ extensive of all arts, the discipline of a good life.” Leo, prince of the Phliasians,|| asking Heraclides Ponticus, what art or science he made profession of ? I know, said he, neither art nor science, but I am a philosopher. One reproaching Diogenes, that, being ignorant, he should pretend to philosophy : I therefore pretend to it, said he, so much more to

\* Hor. Epist. xvii. lib. 1, ver. 23.

† Idem, ib. ver. 25, 26, 29.

‡ Cic. Tusc. Quæst. lib. iv. cap. 3.

|| It was not Heraclides, but Pythagoras that returned this answer to Leo ; and it was from a book of Heraclides, a disciple of Plato, that Cicero quotes this passage, as he says in his Tusc. Quæst. lib. v. cap. 3. Plato was not born till above 100 years after Pythagoras.

the purpose.\* Hegesias desired that he would read a certain book to him. You are a pleasant companion, said he to him, you choose figs that are true and natural, and not those that are painted; why do not you all choose exercises that are natural and genuine, rather than those that are prescribed?

He will not so much get his lesson by heart as by practice. We shall discover if there is prudence in his enterprises, if there be goodness and justice in his deportment, judgment and grace in his speaking, fortitude in his sickness, modesty in his merriment, temperance in his pleasures, order in his economy, and indifference in his palate, as to flesh, fish, wine, or water. *Qui disciplinam suam non ostentationem scientiæ, sed legem vitæ putet, quique obtemperet ipse sibi, et decretis pareat.*† “Who considers his learning not as a vain ostentation of science, but as a “rule of life, and who obeys its decrees, and “observes its regimen.” The conduct of our lives is the true mirror of our conversation. When one asked Zeupidamus,‡ why the Lacedæmonians committed their constitutions of chivalry to writing, and did not give them to their youth to read? he made answer, Because they chose to accustom them to action, rather than to amuse them with words. With such as this, compare one of those college Latinists, who has thrown away fifteen or sixteen years in only learning to speak. The world is nothing but babble, and I never yet saw the man who did not rather talk more than he ought, and yet half of our time is consumed this way. We are subjected four or five years to learn the meaning of words, and to tack them together into clauses; as many more to distribute one copious discourse into four or five parts; and the remaining five years, at least, to learn succinctly to mix and interweave

\* Diogenes Laertius, in the life of Diogenes the Cynic, lib. v. sect. 48.

† Cic. Tusc. Quæst. lib. ii. cap. 4.

‡ Plutarch, in the notable sayings of the Lacedæmonians.



them after a subtle manner. Let us leave such a task to those who make it their particular profession.

The story of two pedagogues who went to Bourdeaux.

Going one day to Orleans, I met, in the plain on this side of Clery, with two pedagogues travelling towards Bourdeaux, the one above fifty paces before the other; and at some distance behind I saw a troop of horse, with the commander at their head, who was the late Monsieur the count de la Rouchefoucault: one of my companions inquired of the foremost of the two pedants who that gentleman was that followed him, who, not having perceived the train in their rear, and thinking that he meant his companion, answered pleasantly, "He is not a gentleman, sir, he is a grammarian, and I am a logician."

A youth of a good family ought to be more carefully instructed in the knowledge of things than of words.

Now we, who on the contrary do not aim to form a grammarian nor logician, but a gentleman, leave them to mispend their time; our business lies another way: for let our pupil be well furnished with things, words will flow but too fast; he will drag them after him, if they are not ready to follow. I have known some make excuses for want of a capacity to express themselves, and pretend to have a great many fine thoughts, but, for want of elocution, are not able to utter them; but this is a sham. Would you know what I think of it? I take their thoughts to be nothing but shadows of some irregular conceptions which they are not able to connect and clear up in their own minds, nor by consequence to bring them out. They do not yet themselves understand what they would be at; and if you observe how they hesitate upon the point of parturition, you will soon perceive that their labour is not to a delivery, but merely in conception, and that they are still licking the imperfect embryo. For my part, I am of opinion, and Socrates lays it down as a rule, that whoever has a sprightly and clear imagination, will be able to express it well enough in some dialect or other, and if dumb, by signs:

*Verbaque provisam rem non invita sequentur.\**

When once a thing conceiv'd is in the mind,  
Words to express it a quick passage find.

And as another says as poetically in prose, *Cum res animum occupavere, verba ambiunt* :† “ When the “ mind is once master of a thing, words are eager “ to utter it :” and this other, *ipsæ res verba rapiunt* :‡ “ Things themselves draw out words after “ them.” He knows nothing of ablative, conjunctive, subjunctive, nor of grammar, no more than his lackey or a fishwoman at the Petit Pont ; and yet their tongues will run till you are tired of hearing them, and, perhaps, will trip as little in their language as the best master of arts in France. He knows no rhetoric, nor how to word a preface, so as to sooth a reader, nor is he solicitous to know it. In truth, all this decoration of painting is easily obscured by the lustre of simple and blunt truth. Such fine flourishes serve only to amuse the vulgar, who are not able to digest food that is more substantial and strengthening, as Afer plainly shows in Tacitus. || The ambassadors of Samos came to Cleomenes, king of Sparta, prepared with a long and elegant oration, to incite him to a war against the tyrant Polycrates, who, after he had heard them with patience, gave them this short answer, § “ As to the preamble, I “ remember it not, nor consequently the middle of “ your speech, and as to your conclusion I will do “ nothing that you desire.” A fine answer this, methinks, and the speech-makers were, no doubt, quite confounded. And how fared it with the other ? The Athenians were to choose one out of two architects to be the director of a great fabric, the one of which,

\* Hor. Art. Poet. ver. 311. † Senec. Contr. l. iii. in the Preface.

‡ Cic. de Finibus, lib. iii. cap. 5.

|| In a Dialogue, intituled, *De Causis corruptæ Eloquentiæ*, the author of which is not very well known. Several of the learned, as well as Montaigne, ascribe it to Tacitus, others to Quintilian, &c.

§ Plutarch, in the notable sayings of the Lacedæmonians.

an affected fellow, offered his service in a fine premeditated harangue upon the subject, and by his oratory inclined the suffrage of the people in his favour; but the other only made use of these few words, "Ye lords of Athens, what this man hath only said, I will perform."\* When Cicero was in the highest reputation for his eloquence, he was admired by many; but Cato,† making a jest of it, only said, "We have a pleasant consul." Whether it goes before or after, a good sentence, or a fine passage, is always in season; if it neither coheres with what went before, nor follows after, it is however good in itself. I am none of those who think that good rhyme makes a good poem. Let the bard make a short syllable long if he will, it is a matter of no moment; if there be invention in his piece, and if wit and judgment have acted their parts well in it, I will style him a good poet, though a bad rhymers :

*Emunctæ naris, durus componere versus.‡*

His wit is delicate, though harsh his verse.

Let a man, says Horace, strip such a poem as he there speaks of, viz. that of Ennius, of all its connections and measures,

*Tempora certa, modosque, et quod prius ordine verbum est,  
Posterius faciat, præponens ultima primis,  
Invenias etiam disjecti membra poetæ.§*

\* Plutarch, in his instructions for those who manage state affairs.

† Montaigne gives too general a latitude to Cato's reflections, though perhaps he did so for the purpose. Cato did not ridicule Cicero's eloquence in the general, but only his abuse of it while he was consul. When he was pleading one day for Murena against Cato, he fell to ridiculing the gravest principles of the stoic philosophy in too comic a manner, and consequently not becoming the august station he then was in. This is what drew Cato's answer above-mentioned, which was more stinging than all the invectives which Cicero had so lately cast at this great man, who was much more a stoic by his manners, than by his discourses. See Plutarch, in the Life of Cato, ch. 6 of Amyot's translation.

‡ Hor. Sat. iv. lib. i. ver. 8.

§ Hor. lib. i. sat. iv. ver. 58.

"Let tense, and mood, and words be all misplac'd,  
Those last that should be first, those first the last;  
Though all things be thus shuffled out of frame,  
You'll find the poet's fragments not to blame.

He will nevertheless acknowledge that the very scraps themselves are excellent. This was the import of Menander's answer, who, when the day was at hand on which he had promised a comedy, being reproved that he made no great progress in it, said, "It was composed and ready, all except the verses." \* Having contrived the acts and the scenes in his fancy, he made little account of the rest.

Since Ronsard and Bellay have brought our French poetry into reputation, every little dabbler in it, for aught I see, swells his words as high, and makes his cadences very near as harmonious, as they did. *Plus sonat, quam valet*:† "More sound than sense." As to low life, there were never so many poetasters as now; but though they find it no hard task to rhyme as musically as they, yet they fall infinitely short in imitating the noble descriptions of the one, and the curious inventions of the other.

But what shall our young gentleman do if he be attacked with the sophistical subtlety of some syllogism. A gammon of bacon makes a man drink, drink quenches thirst; *ergo* the bacon quenches thirst. Why, let him laugh at it, and it will be more discretion to do so, than to answer it, *Subtilius est contempsisse quam solve*.‡ Or let him borrow this pleasant counter-policy of Aristippus, § "Why should I unbind him, who, bound as he is, gives me so much perplexity?" A person endeavouring to pose Cleanthes with some logical subtleties, Chrysippus took him up short, saying, || Reserve your juggling tricks to play with children, and do

Invention is the principal part of a piece of poetry.

A youth of good parentage ought to despise sophistical subtleties.

\* Plutarch, in his tract, whether the Athenians were more eminent in arms than in letters, cap. 4.

† Senec. Epist. 40. ‡ Idem, Epist. 49.

§ Diogenes Laertius, in the life of Aristippus, lib. ii. sect. 70.

|| Diogenes Laertius, in the Life of Chrysippus, lib. vii. sect. 183.

not let them draw aside the serious thoughts of a man in years. If these ridiculous subtleties, *contorta, et aculeata sophismata* :\* those perplexed and crabbed sophisms, as Cicero calls them, are designed to make him believe a lie, they are dangerous ; but if they answer no other purpose than only to make him laugh, I do not see why he need to be fortified against them. Some are so silly as to go a mile out of their way to hook in a fine term or phrase. *Aut qui non verba rebus aptant, sed res extrinsecus arcesunt, quibus verba conveniant* :† “ Either they do not adapt their terms to their subject, or ramble from their subject in quest of things to which the words may agree.” And, as another says, *Qui alicujus verbi decore placentis vocentur ad id, quod non proposuerant scribere* :‡ “ Who, charmed by some word that pleases them, engage in a subject which they had no design to treat of.” For my part, I choose to twist in a fine sentence, to tack it to my subject, rather than to untwist the thread of my subject, by deviating from it in quest of such sentence. On the contrary, words are to serve and follow a man’s purpose, and let the Gascon language take place where the French will not do. I would have the imagination of the hearer entirely engrossed by the subject, although the words are forgot. The style I am fond of is natural and plain, both in speaking and writing ; a style that is nervous and concise, not so delicate and florid, as masterly and forcible. *Hæc demum sapiet dictio, quæ feriet* :§ “ The expression which touches the mind will infallibly please it :” rather intricate than long-winded periods, free from affectation ; not stiff nor disjointed ; not pedantic, nor monk, nor lawyer-like, but rather soldier-like, as Suetonius calls that of

\* Cic. Acad. Quæst. lib. iv. cap. 24.

† Quintil. lib. viii.

‡ Senec. Epist. 59.

§ The Latin verse is taken from a sort of epitaph in Lucan, which is to be found entire in the Supplement to Fabricius’s *Bibliotheca Latina*, p. 167.

Julius Cæsar; yet why he called it so, I cannot well conceive.

I have been ready enough to imitate that loose fashion, which is observable in the dress of our young fellows; to wear my cloak flung upon one shoulder, my cap on one side, one stocking looser than the other, which represents a haughty disdain of the foreign ornaments, and a negligence of art, which I find of much greater use in the forms of speech. All affectation, particularly in the French gaiety and freedom, is unbecoming a courtier, whose dress ought to be the model for every gentleman in a monarchy, for which reason an easy and natural negligence does well. I no more like a piece of stuff wove, in which the knots and seams are to be seen, than a skin so delicate, that a man may count the bones and veins. *Quæ veritati operam dat oratio, incomposita fit, et simplex*\*—*Quis accuratè loquitur, nisi qui vult putidè loqui*:† “Let the speech, that has “truth for its aim, be plain and artless.” What man strives to speak accurately without exposing this affectation? that sort of eloquence which makes us in love with ourselves, does an injury to the subject it treats of. As in our apparel it is unmanly to distinguish ourselves by any singular garb that is not in the fashion; so in language, to hunt for new phrases, and unknown terms, proceeds from a scholastic and puerile ambition. May I be permitted to use no other terms but those that will do as well for the markets at Paris! Aristophanes, the grammarian, understood nothing of the matter, when he reproved Epicurus for the simplicity of his expression, and the design of his oratory, which was only perspicuity of language.‡ The imitation of speaking by its own facility, immediately runs through a whole nation; but the imitation of judging and inventing words is not so quick in its progress. The

Montaigne's style free from all affectation.

\* Seneca, Ep. 40.

† Idem, Epist. 75.

‡ Diogenes Laertius, in the life of Epicurus, lib. x. sect. 13.

generality of readers, because they have found a like robe, imagine, very falsely, that they have a like body; whereas strength and sinews are not to be borrowed, though the gloss and outward ornament may. Most of those who resort to me, speak the language of my essays; but whether they have the same sentiments, I know not. The Athenians, says Plato,\* are eminent for speaking copiously and elegantly, the Lacedæmonians concisely, while those of Crete aim more at the fertility of the imagination, than the copiousness of language, and these are the best. Zeno said, that he had two sorts of disciples, the one whom he termed φιλολόγους, curious to learn things, and these were his favourites; the others λογοφίλους, who cared for nothing but language. [*Stobæus Serm. 34.*] This does not mean that speaking well is not a fine and a happy talent, but only that it is not so happy as some consider it, and I am scandalised that this should engross our whole time. I would fain understand my own language first; and next, that of my neighbours, with whom I most correspond.

The Greek and Latin languages may be learned with less pains than are usually taken.

Greek and Latin are no doubt very fine accomplishments, but we purchase them at too dear a rate. I will here discover one method whereby, as I myself have experienced, they may be had much cheaper, and who will may make use of it. My deceased father, having made all the inquiry that a man could possibly do among men of learning and understanding of an exact method of education, was by them apprised of this inconvenience which attended the modern practice; and he was told, that the tedious time we spent in learning the languages, which cost the ancient Greeks† and Romans very little, if any,

\* De Legibus, lib. i. p. 572.

† The antient Greeks, more fortunate or wiser than the Romans, only learned their own language; whereas the Romans commonly joined the study of Greek to that of the Latin tongue, and derived almost all their notions from the Greek books, both their poetry and their philosophy being scarce any thing more than translations from the Greek.

was the only reason why we could not attain to their magnanimity or knowledge. I do not, however, believe that to be the only cause; but the expedient my father found out for this was, that while I was at nurse, and before I began to speak, he committed me to the care of a German, who since died a famous physician in France, totally ignorant of our language indeed, but very well versed in the Latin.

This gentleman, whom he had sent for out of his own country on purpose, and to whom he paid an extraordinary salary, had me continually in his arms, and to him were joined two others of inferior learning to attend me by way of relief to him; and all these talked to me in no other language but Latin. As to the rest of his family, it was an inviolable rule, that neither himself, nor my mother, nor the footman, nor the chambermaid, should speak any thing in my company but such Latin words as each had learnt only to gabble with me. It is not to be imagined how great an advantage this proved to the whole family. My father and mother, by this means, learned Latin enough to understand it, and to speak it well enough to serve their occasions, as did also those of the domestics who were most attendant upon me. To be short, we latinised it to such a degree, that it overflowed to all our neighbouring villages, where there still remain, having established themselves by custom, several Latin names of artificers and their tools. As for myself, I was above six years of age before I understood either French, or Perigordin, any more than Arabic; and without art, book, grammar, or precept, without the lash, and without shedding a tear, I had learned to speak as pure Latin as my schoolmaster, for I could not have confounded nor corrupted it. If, by way of trial, they were disposed to give me a theme after the college fashion, they gave it to the others in French, but to me they gave it in bad Latin that I might turn it into good. And Nicholas Grouchi, who wrote *De Comitibus Romanorum*; William Guirentes,

Latin  
taught to  
Montaigne  
before the  
French  
tongue, and  
with what  
success.



who wrote a Comment upon Aristotle; George Buchanan, the great poet of Scotland; and Marcus Antonius Muretus (whom both France and Italy have acknowledged to be the best orator of his time), my domestic preceptors, have often told me, that, in my very childhood, I had this language so ready and fluent, that they were afraid to accost me in it. Buchanan, when I saw him afterwards in the retinue of the late Mareschal de Brissac, told me, that he was about to write a treatise on the education of children, and that he would take the model of it from mine: for he was then tutor to that count de Brissac, whom we have since seen so valiant and brave a gentleman.

Montaigne  
learned  
Greek in  
his pas-  
times.

As to Greek, of which I know very little, if any thing at all, my father intended to make me learn it by art, but in a new way, by the means of recreation and exercise, tossing our declensions to and fro, after the manner of those who learn arithmetic and geometry, by certain games on the chess-board. For, amongst other things, he had been advised to make me relish my learning and my duty by an unforced will, and at my own desire, and to train me up with all gentleness and freedom, without any severity or constraint, which, I may say, he observed so very superstitiously, that, as some are of opinion, it disorders the tender brains of children to awake them by surprise in the morning, and suddenly and violently to snatch them from sleep (in which they are more profoundly involved than we are) he caused me to be waked out of it by the sound of some instrument of music, and I was never without a musician for that purpose. This instance will be sufficient to form an idea of the rest, as well as to recommend both the prudence and the affection of so good a father, who is not at all to be blamed, if he has not reaped the fruit answerable to so exquisite a culture, of which these two things were the cause. First, a barren and improper soil. For though I was of a strong and healthful, and of a mild and tract-

able temper, I was withal so heavy, indolent, and sleepy, that they could not rouse me from this stupidity, not even to play. What I saw, I saw clearly enough; and, in this lazy disposition, nourished bold imaginations and opinions above one of my age. I had a slow genius, which made no progress faster than it was led; a dull apprehension, a languid invention, and, after all, an incredible defect of memory; so that no wonder, if taking all this together, my father could extract nothing of value. Secondly, as they, who, impatient for the cure of a distemper, submit to all manner of advice; so the good man, being extremely fearful of failing in a thing which he had so much at heart, suffered himself at last to be over-ruled by the common opinion, as one fool always makes many, and, in compliance with the fashion of the time, having dismissed those Italians from about him who had given him the first plans of my education, he sent me, when I was about six years of age, to the college of Guienne, which was very flourishing at that time, and the best in France, where he took all possible care to choose able tutors for me, and provide every thing else proper for my education, in which he made a reservation of many particular forms contrary to the practice of the colleges; but, with all these precautions, it was still a college. My Latin immediately grew corrupt, of which, by discontinuance, I have since left all manner of use; so that this new-fashioned education was of no other service to me, than, at my arrival there, to prefer me over the heads of others to the first classes; for at thirty-three years old, when I came from the college, I had run through my whole course (as they call it), and, in truth, without any manner of improvement that I can at this time recollect.

The pleasure I found in the fables in Ovid's *Metamorphosis* first gave me a liking to books: for when I was about seven or eight years old, I stole from every other pleasure to read them, forasmuch as the

How Montaigne began to take a fancy to reading of authors.

language of this book was my mother-tongue, and that it was the easiest book I knew, and the most adapted to the capacity of my tender years. As to Lancelot of the Lake, Amadis de Gaul, Huon de Bourdeaux, and such trumpery, the favourite amusements of children, I had not so much as heard the names of them no more than I yet know the contents of them, so strict was the discipline I was brought up in. I was hereby, however, rendered the more indifferent to the study of the other lessons that were prescribed to me: and here it was my singular advantage to have a gentleman of good understanding for my preceptor, who dexterously connived at this and other such deviations from my task. For by this means I ran through Virgil's *Æneid*, Terence, Plautus, and some Italian comedies, being continually allured by the pleasure of the subject; whereas, had he been so unwise as to have interrupted me in this course of my reading, I very believe, I should have brought nothing away from the college, but a hatred of books, as almost all our gentry do. But his conduct in this matter was quite discreet, seeming to take no notice of it; and by permitting me to indulge myself in these books only by stealth from any other regular studies, it made my appetite for them more eager. The chief things my father desired from the endeavours of those to whom he gave the charge of me, were courtesy and compliance; and, to say the truth, my temper had no other vice but pusillanimity and sloth. There was no danger of my doing ill, but of my doing nothing. Nobody prognosticated that I should be wicked, but useless; they foresaw idleness in my nature, but not malice, and I find I have turned out accordingly. The complaints my ears are tingled with are such as these; he is idle, cold in the offices of a friend, and of a relation, and in the public offices too particular, and too scornful: the worst, however, of his enemies do not say, Why has he not taken such a thing? Why has he not paid such a

debt? but, Why does he not part with this? Why does he not give that? And I should take it as a favour, that men would expect no works of supererogation but such as these: but they are unjust to exact from me what I do not owe, and with more severity than is necessary, they impose upon themselves to pay their own debts. In condemning me for this, they cancel the gratification of the act, and the gratitude which would be due to me for it: whereas the doing a good action ought to be deemed of so much the greater value from my hands, by reason I never was under obligation to any body for a favour. As my fortune is my own, I am the more at liberty to dispose of it, as I am of my person the more it is my own. Nevertheless, if I was good at blazoning my own actions, I could, perhaps, very fairly repel these reproaches, and could give some to understand, that they are not so much offended that I do not do enough, as that I am able to do a great deal more than I do. Yet, for all this, my mind, at the same time, had secret and strong agitations, and formed solid and clear judgments about those objects it comprehended, and it alone digested them without any help: and, amongst other things, I do really believe it would have been altogether incapable of submitting to force and violence. Shall I place to this account one faculty of my youth, viz. a bold countenance, attended with a smooth tongue, and a supple behaviour, applicable to the parts which I was to undertake? For,

*Alter ab undecimo tum me vix reperat annus.\**

I was but just entered into my twelfth year, when I played the chief parts in the Latin tragedies of Buchanan, Guerent, and Muretus, which are acted with great applause in our college at Guienne. In this Andreas Goveanus, our principal, as in all other branches of his office, was, incomparably the greatest principal in France; and I was looked upon as a

\* Virg. Ecl. viii. ver. 39.

masterly actor. This is an exercise which I do not discommend in young people of condition ; and I have seen some of our princes, after the example of the ancients, perform such exercises, in person, with dignity and applause. It was even allowable to persons of quality in Greece to make a profession of it. *Aristoni tragico actori rem aperet : huic et genus, et fortuna honesta erant : nec ars, quia nihil tale apud Græcos pudori est ea deformabat :*\* “ He discovered “ the affair to Ariston, a young tragedian, a man of “ a good family and fortune, neither of which qualities were disgraced by his art, nothing of this kind “ being reckoned a disparagement in Greece.” For I have always taxed those with impertinence who condemn these recreations, and those persons with injustice, who refuse to admit such comedians, as were worthy of it, into our capital towns, and who grudge the people these public diversions. Well governed corporations take care to assemble the citizens, not only for the solemn duties of devotion, but also for sports and pastimes. Society and friendship are augmented by it ; and, besides, they cannot possibly be allowed more regular diversions than what are performed in the presence of all persons, and in the sight of the magistrate himself. For my part too, I should think it but right, that the prince should sometimes, at his own expense, gratify the common people, in token of his paternal affection and goodness ; and that, in populous towns, there should be theatres erected and set apart for such entertainments, were it only to divert them from worse and more secret actions. But, to return to my subject, there is nothing like alluring the appetite and affection of the young learners, otherwise they turn out only as so many asses laden with books, and have their pockets crammed with learning to keep by virtue of the lash ; whereas, to act rightly, would be not only to lodge it with them, but to make them espouse it.

\* Tit. Liv. lib. xxiv. cap. 24.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

*The Folly of making our Capacity a Standard for the Measure of Truth and Error.*

IT is not, perhaps, without reason, that we ascribe facility of belief, and easiness of persuasion, to simplicity and ignorance; for, I think, I have heretofore heard belief compared to an impression stamped upon our mind, which, by how much the softer and the more flexible it is, the more easily it receives any impression. *Ut necesse est lancem in libra ponderibus impositis, de primis sic animum perspicuis cedere:* \* “As one of the scales of a balance must be depressed by putting weight into it, so the assent of the mind must of necessity yield to things that are evident.” And the more the mind is free, and turns upon an uneven balance, the easier it is weighed down by the first persuasion. This is the reason why children, the common people, women, and sick folks, are most liable to be led by the ears. But then, on the other hand, it is a silly presumption to slight and condemn every thing as false, because it does not seem to us likely to be true, which is the common failing of such as fancy themselves wiser than their neighbours. I was myself formerly of that opinion; and if I heard talk either of spirits walking, of prognostications of futurity, of enchantments, witchcraft, or any other tale which I knew not what to make of,

*Somnia, terrores magicos, miracula, sagas,  
Nocturnos lemures, portentaque Thessala rides ?†  
Can you in earnest laugh at all the schemes  
Of magic terrors, visionary dreams,  
Portentous prodigies, and imps of hell,  
The nightly goblins, and enchanting spell ?*

\* Cic. Acad. Quæst. lib. iv. (qui inscribitur Lucullus) cap. 12.

† Hor. lib. ii. Epist. 2, ver. 208, 209.

I pitied the poor people that were imposed upon by these fooleries ; and now I find that I myself was to be pitied as much at least as they. ' Not that experience has taught me any thing to supersede my former opinions, though I have not wanted curiosity ; but reason has instructed me, that thus resolutely to condemn a thing as false and impossible, is to presume to set limits to God's will, and the power of nature, our common mother ; and that it is the most egregious folly in the world to measure either the one or the other by the standard of our shallow capacities. If we give the epithets of *monstrous* and *miraculous* to what our reason cannot comprehend, how many things of that nature are continually before our eyes ? Let us but consider through what clouds, and how we are led groping, as it were, in the dark, to the knowledge of the things we are possessed of, and we shall surely find, that it is rather custom than knowledge that makes them appear not strange to us :

—*Jam nemo fessus saturusque videndi,\**

*Susplicere in cœli dignatur lucida templa.†*

Already glutted with the sight, now none,  
Heav'n's lucid temples deigns to look upon.

and that if those things were now presented as new to us, we should think them equally, or more incredible than any other :

—*Si nunc primum mortalibus adsint*

*Ex improvise, seu sint objecta repente,*

*Nil magis his rebus poterat mirabile dici,*

*Aut minus ante quod auderent fore credere gentes.‡*

Were those things suddenly, or by surprise,

Just now objected, new to mortal eyes ;

At nothing could they be astonish'd more,

Nor could have form'd a thought of them before.

The man who had never seen a river in his whole

\* It is in Lucretius, *fessus satiate videndi*, *satiare* being the ablative case of the noun substantive *satias*.

† Lucret. lib. ii. ver. 1097, 1098.

‡ Ib. ver. 1092 to 1095.

life, thought the first he met with to be the ocean; and the things which are the greatest within our knowledge, we think to be the greatest that nature has formed of the kind:

*Scilicet et fluvius qui non maximus, ei est  
Qui non ante aliquem majorem vidit et ingens;  
Arbor homoque videtur, et omnia de genere omni  
Maxime quæ vidit quisque, hæc ingentia fingit.\**

A little river unto him does seem,  
That bigger never saw, a mighty stream;  
A tree, a man; all things seem to his view  
O' th' kind the greatest, that ne'er greater knew.

*Consuetudine oculorum, assuescunt animi, neque admirantur, neque requirunt rationes earum rerum, quas semper vident:*† “ Things grow familiar to “ men’s minds by being often seen; so that they “ neither admire, nor are inquisitive into, the causes “ of them.” It is the novelty, rather than the grandeur, of things, that tempts us to inquire into their causes. But we are to judge with more reverence for that infinite power of nature, and with a greater acknowledgment of our own ignorance and infirmity. How many unlikely things are there testified by persons of credit, which, if we cannot absolutely believe, we ought at least to live in suspense? For to conclude them impossible, is rashly presuming to pretend to know the utmost bounds of possibility. Did we rightly understand the difference between things impossible and unusual, and what is contrary to the order and course of nature, and contrary to the common opinion of mankind, in not believing rashly, nor, on the other hand, being too incredulous, we should observe the rule of *Ne quid nimis*, enjoined by Chilo.‡

\* Lucr. lib. vi. ver. 674 to 677. † Cic. de Nat. Deor. lib. ii. cap. 38.

‡ *Μαθὴς ἄγας*, Aristotle in his Rhetoric, lib. xi. cap. 12, and Pliny (Nat. Hist. lib. vii. cap. 32) ascribe this maxim to Chilo, as does Diogenes Laertius in the Life of Thales, lib. i. sect. 41, but he afterwards ascribes it to Solon, in his Life of Solon, lib. i. sect. 63. It has been also attributed to others. See Menage’s Observations on Diogenes Laertius in the Life of Thales, lib. i. sect. 41.



When we read, in Froissart,\* that the count de Foix knew, in Bearn, the defeat of king John, of Castile, at Juberoth, in 1385, the day after it happened, and the means by which he tells us he came to hear it so soon, it is enough to make one laugh; as well as at what we are told in our annals, that pope Honorius, on the very day that Philip Augustus died at Mante, performed his funeral obsequies at Rome, and commanded the like throughout Italy: for the testimony of these authors is not, perhaps, considerable enough to be relied on. But why? if Plutarch, besides several instances of the like kind that he produces from antiquity, says, he is assured by certain knowledge that, in the time of Domitian, the news of the battle lost by Antonius, many days journey from thence,† was published at Rome,‡ and dispersed throughout the world, on the same day it was fought; and if Caesar was of opinion, that it has often happened that the rumour has been antecedent to the event; shall we not say, that those simple men suffered themselves to be deceived with the vulgar, for not being so clear-sighted as we? Is there any thing more delicate, more exact, and more sprightly than Pliny's judgment, when he is pleased to give it exercise? Is there any thing more exempt from vanity? Setting aside his excellent learning, of which I make the least account, in which of these two do we surpass him? And yet there is scarce a pretender to learning but will pronounce him a liar, and pretend to instruct him in the progress of the works of nature.

When we read, in Bouchet, the miracles performed by St. Hilary's relics, away with such stuff! his authority is not sufficient to restrain us from the liberty of contradicting him; but to condemn all such stories in the lump is, I think, a singular piece of impu-

\* Froissart, vol. iii. cap. 17, p. 63, &c. The story is very tedious, and perfectly ridiculous.

† Above 840 leagues, says Plutarch, in the Life of Paulus Æmilius.

‡ There is no body in my time, adds Plutarch, but knows this.

dence. The great St. Austin says, he saw a blind child recover its sight by the relics of St. Gervase, and St. Protasius at Milan;\* and a woman at Carthage cured of a cancer, by the sign of the cross made upon her by a woman newly baptised; that Hesperius,† a familiar friend of his, drove away spirits, that haunted his house, with a little of the earth of our Lord's sepulchre; and that the same earth, being afterwards carried to the church, a man afflicted with the palsy was there suddenly cured by it; that a woman, in a proceession, having touched the shrine of St. Stephen with a nosegay, and therewith rubbed her eyes, recovered her sight, which she had been a long time deprived of; not to mention several other miracles, at which, he says, he was himself present. Of what shall we accuse him and the two holy bishops, Aurelius and Maximin, whom he appeals to for his vouchers? Shall it be of ignorance, simplicity, credulity, or of knavery and imposture? Is there a man in this age so impudent as to think himself comparable to them either in virtue and piety, or in knowledge, judgment, and capacity? *Qui ut rationem nullam afferent, ipsa auctoritate me frangerent.*‡ "Who, though they should offer me no reason, would convince me by their single authority." It is a presumption of great danger and consequence, besides the absurd temerity it is attended with, of contemning what we do not

\* Augustin, de Civitate Dei, lib. xii. cap. 8.

† Montaigne is guilty here of a small mistake. St. Austin does not ascribe this expulsion of the evil spirits to that small quantity of the earth of our Lord's sepulchre which Hesperius had in his house; for, according to St. Austin, one of his priests, having, at the entreaty of Hesperius, repaired to his house, and offered the sacrifice of the body of Christ, and having prayed earnestly to God to put a stop to this disturbance, God did so that very instant. As to the earth taken from the sepulchre of Jesus Christ, Hesperius kept it suspended in his own bedchamber, to secure him from the insults of the devils, who had been very mischievous to his slaves and cattle; for though he was protected against the evil spirits by this earth, yet its influence did not extend to the rest of his family.

‡ Cic. Tusc. Quæst. lib. i. cap. 21.

comprehend; for after that, according to your fine understanding, you have settled the limits of truth and falsehood, and it should happen that you are under a necessity of believing stranger things than those you deny, you are actually obliged to recede from the limits you have established. Now what I think so much disquiets our consciences in our commotions on the score of religion, is the catholics' dispensation of their creed: they fancy they act with moderation and understanding, when they give up to their adversaries any of the articles that are controverted; but, besides that they do not discern of what advantage it is to their adversaries to begin to yield to them, and to retire, and how much this animates the adversaries to follow the blow; those articles which they chose as the most indifferent, are sometimes very important. We are either totally to submit to the authority of our ecclesiastical polity, or be entirely exempted from it. It is not for us to determine what share of obedience we are to pay to it; and, moreover, this I can say, as having myself formerly made trial of it, that, having used the liberty of choosing particularly for myself, being indifferent as to certain points of the discipline of our church, which to me seemed to have an aspect more vain, or more strange, coming after to discourse the matter with some men of learning, I found that those very things had a substantial and very solid basis; and that it is nothing but brutality and ignorance which makes us receive them with less reverence than the rest. Why do not we recollect what contradiction we find in our own opinions? How many things were articles of faith yesterday, which to-day we treat as no other than fables? Vain-glory and curiosity are the torments of our mind. This last prompts us to dive into affairs with which we have no concern, while the former forbids us to leave any thing undetermined and undecided.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

*Of Friendship.*

HAVING observed in what manner a painter, who serves me, disposed of his workmanship, I had a fancy to imitate him. He chooses the fairest part and the middle of a wall or partition, wherein he places a picture, which he has finished, with the utmost care and art, and he fills up the void spaces that are about it, with grotesque figures, which are fanciful strokes of the pencil, without any beauty but what they derive from their variety and oddness. And in truth, what are these essays of mine but grotesques, and monstrous pieces of patch-work put together without any certain figure, or any order, connection, or proportion, but what is accidental? As the mermaid,

*Desinat in piscem mulier formosa superne.\**

Which a fair woman's face above doth show,  
But in a fish's tail doth end below.

In the latter part I go hand in hand with my painter, but fall very short of him in the former and the better part, for I have not so much skill as to pretend to give a fine picture executed according to art. I have, therefore, thought fit to borrow one from Stephen de Boetius,† which will be an honour to all the rest of this work. It is a discourse, which he has entitled *La Servitude Volontaire*, “Voluntary Slavery;” but some, who did not know what he intended by that title, have since very properly given it another, viz. *Contre un*.‡ It is a piece,

\* Hor. de Arte Poetica, ver. 4.

† Yet it is not here, and why Montaigne has not inserted it, he tells us at the end of this chapter.

‡ This, if I am not mistaken, means a discourse against monarchy or government by one person alone, agreeably to what Montaigne says, at the end of this chapter, That if Boetius could have made his option, he would rather have been born at Venice, than at Sarlat.

which he wrote in his younger years, by way of essay, for the honour of liberty against tyrants. It has passed through the hands of men of the best understanding, with very great recommendations, as it highly deserved, for it is elegantly written, and as full as any thing can be on the subject. Yet it may truly be said, that he was capable of a better performance; and if in that riper age, wherein I had the happiness to be acquainted with him, he had entered upon an undertaking like this of mine, to commit his fancies to writing, we should have seen many uncommon things, and such as would have gone very near to have rivalled the best writings of the ancients: for in this branch of natural endowments especially, I know no man comparable to him. But we have nothing of his left, save only this tract (and that even by chance, for I believe he never saw it after he let it go out of his hands); and some memoirs concerning that edict of January,\* made famous by our civil wars, which perhaps may find a place elsewhere. This is all that I have been able to recover of what he has left behind him (though with such an affectionate remembrance on his death bed,† he did, by his will, bequeath his library and papers to me), except the little volume of his works, which I committed to the press;‡ and to which I am particularly obliged, because it was the introduction of our first acquaintance; for it had been shown to me, long before I knew his person, and as it gave me the first knowledge of his name, it consequently laid the foundation of that friendship, which we mutually cultivated so long as it pleased God to spare his life; a friendship so entire, and so perfect, that certainly the like is hardly to be found in story, nor is there the least trace of it to be seen in the practice of the

\* It was issued in 1562, in the reign of Charles IX. yet a minor.

† See the discourse upon the death of Stephen de la Boetius, composed by Montaigne, and published at the end of this edition.

‡ Printed at Paris by Frederick Morel in 1571. I shall speak of it more particularly in another place.

moderns. Indeed there must be such a concurrence of circumstances to the perfecting of such a friendship, that it is very much if fortune brings it to pass once in three years.

There is nothing to which nature seems to have more inclined us than society; and Aristotle says, that the good legislators were more tender of friendship than of justice. Now this is the utmost point of the perfection of society: for generally all those friendships that are created and cultivated by pleasure, profit, public or private necessity, are so much the less amiable and generous, and so much the less friendships, as they have another motive and design, and consequence, than pure friendship itself.

Neither are those four ancient kinds, viz. natural, social, hospitable, and venerean, either separately or jointly correspondent with, or do they constitute true friendship. That of children to parents is rather respect; friendship being nourished by a communication which cannot be formed between them, by reason of the too great disparity of age, and would perhaps violate the obligations of nature; for neither are all the secret thoughts of the parents communicable to their children, for fear of creating an unsuitable familiarity between them; nor could admonitions and corrections, one of the principal offices of friendship, be exercised by children to their parents. There are some countries, where it is the custom for children to kill their fathers; and others, where the fathers kill their children, to avoid their being an impediment to their designs; and naturally the hopes of the one are founded in the destruction of the other. There have been philosophers who have despised this tie of nature; \* witness Aristippus, who, when he was seriously told of the affection he owed to his children, as they were descended from his loins, fell a-spitting, and said, that also came from him, and that we likewise bred lice and worms:

Friendship the most happy consequence of society.

Friendship does not tally properly with the four sorts of connection, distinguished by the ancients.

\* Diog. Laert. in the Life of Aristippus, lib. ii. sect. 81.

witness another, whom Plutarch endeavoured to reconcile with his brother; I make never the more account of him, said he, for coming out of the same hole.\* This word Brother, is indeed a fine sounding, and a most affectionate name; and for this reason, Boetius and I styled ourselves brothers:† but the jumble of interest, the division of estates, and the necessity that the wealth of the one must be the impoverishment of the other, wonderfully dissolve and relax this fraternal cement. When brothers seek their way to preferment by the same path or channel, it is hardly possible but they must often jostle and hinder one another. Moreover, why is it necessary that the correspondence and relation, which creates such true and perfect friendship, should be found in kindred? The father and the son may happen to be of a quite contrary disposition, and so may brothers. This is my son: this is my father, but he is passionate, a knave, or a fool. And then, the more those friendships are required of us by law and the obligations of nature, so much the less is there in them of our own choice and voluntary freedom; and, indeed, our free will has no production more properly its own, than that of affection and friendship. Not that I have not myself experienced all that is possible in this respect, having had the best of fathers, who was also the most indulgent even to extreme old age, and descended of a family, for many generations famous and exemplary for this brotherly concord:

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*Et ipse*  
*Notus in fratres animi paterni.†*

\* In Plutarch's Treatise of Brotherly Love, ch. 4.

† That is to say, that according to the usage established in Montaigne's time, they gave one another the style of brothers, as it was to be the token and pledge of the friendship which they had contracted. And upon the same principles, Mademoiselle de Gourvay, styled herself Montaigne's daughter, and not because Montaigne married her mother, as I have heard it affirmed in good company.

‡ Hor. lib. ii. Ode 2.

And I myself was known to prove  
A father in fraternal love.

As for the love we bear to women, though it arises from our own choice, we are not to bring it into comparison, or rank it with the others. Its fire, I confess,

*(Neque enim est Dea nescia nostri  
Quæ dulcem curis miscet amaritatem.\**

Nor is my goddess ign'rant what I am,  
Who pleasing anguish mixes with my flame.)

is more active, more eager and sharper; but withal it is more precipitant and fickle, wavering and variable; a fever subject to paroxysms and intermission, that is confined to only one corner of our fabric; whereas in friendship it is one general and universal heat, but temperate and equal; a heat that is constant and settled, all easy and smooth, without any particle that is rough and poignant. Moreover, in love there is nothing more than a frantic desire of what flies from us:

*Com segue la lepre il cacciatore  
Al freddo, al caldo, alla montagna, al litto:  
Ne piu l'estima poi, che presa vede,  
Et sol dietro à chi fugge affretta il piede.†*

Like hunters that the flying hare pursue  
O'er hills and dale, through heat and morning dew;  
Which being caught, the quarry they despise,  
Being only pleas'd in following that which flies.

As soon as ever love has contracted articles of amity, that is to say, as soon as there is a concurrence of desires, it languishes and vanishes, for fruition destroys it, as having only a carnal appetite, and such a one as is subject to satiety. Friendship, on the contrary, is enjoyed in proportion as it is desired, and it only grows up, thrives and increases by enjoyment, as being of itself spiritual, and the soul is refined by the very practice of it. With this perfect

\* Catullus, Ep. 66.

† Ariosto, cant. x. stanz. 7.



friendship, I cannot deny but those wavering affections have formerly found some place in my breast, not to say a word of my friend Boetius, who confesses but too much of it in his verses. Consequently both these passions have taken possession of me, but so that I knew the one from the other, and never set them on a par, the first soaring aloft with majesty, and looking down with disdain on the latter, stretching its pinions far below it.

The nature of the marriage contract.

As to marriage, besides its being a covenant, the entrance into which is altogether free, but the continuance in it forced and compulsory, and having another dependence than on that of our own free will, and it being also a contract commonly made for other ends; there are a thousand intricacies in it to unravel, enough to break the thread, and interrupt the current of a lively affection; whereas in friendship there is no commerce or transaction, but within itself.

Women supposed to be incapable of perfect friendship.

Moreover, to say the truth, the ordinary talent of women is not such as is sufficient to keep up that correspondence and communication, which are necessary for cultivating this sacred tie; nor do they seem to be endued with that constancy of mind, to bear the constraint of so hard and durable a knot. Could there really be such a free and voluntary familiarity contracted, where not only the soul might have this entire fruition, but the body also share in the alliance, and the whole man be engaged in it, it is certain that the friendship would be more entire and complete; but there is no instance that this sex ever yet attained to such perfection, and by the ancient schools it is denied it ever can.

Friendship against nature, very much in use among the Greeks. Montaigne's opinion of it.

The other Grecian licence is justly abhorred by our moralists, which, however, for having according to their practice so necessary a disparity of age, and difference of offices between the lovers, bears no more proportion than the other to the perfect union and harmony that is here required. *Quis est enim iste amor amicitiae? Cur neque deformem adoles-*

*centem quisquam amat, neque formosum senem?\**

“For what means this love of friendship? How comes it to pass that nobody loves a deformed youth, nor a handsome old man?” Neither do I conceive that the picture which the academy gives of it, will be a contradiction to my assertion, that the first fury inspired by the son of Venus into the heart of the lover, upon the sight of blooming youth, to which they allow all the insolent and passionate efforts that an immoderate ardour can produce, was singly founded on external beauty, the false image of corporeal generation; for it could not be found on the mind which was yet undiscoverable, being but now springing forth, and not of maturity to blossom: which fury, if it seized upon a mean spirit, the object of its pursuit were riches, presents, preferments, and such sorry goods, as they by no means approve; but if this fury fell upon a more generous soul, the means used were also generous, such as philosophical instructions, precepts to revere religion, to obey the laws, to die for the good of one’s country, to give instances of valour, prudence, and justice; the lover studying to render himself agreeable by the grace and beauty of his mind, that of his body being long ago decayed, and hoping by this mental society to establish a more firm and lasting contract. When this courtship had its effect in its due season (for what they do not require in the lover, namely, that he should take time and use discretion in his courtship, they strictly require in the person loved; forasmuch as he is under a necessity to judge of internal beauty, difficult to know and discover), then there sprung up in the person beloved a desire of spiritual conception, by the intervention of a spiritual beauty. This was the principal: the corporeal, accidental, and second causes, are all the reverse or wrong side of the lover. For this reason they prefer the person loved, prove that the gods do the same, and highly

\* Cic. Tusc. Quest. lib. iv. cap. 33.

blame the poet Æschylus, for having, in the amours of Achilles and Patroclus, given the lover's part to Achilles, who was in the first flower and pubescency of youth, and the handsomest of all the Greeks. This general familiarity being once settled, supposing its most worthy proof to be predominant and to perform its proper offices, they say, that from thence great benefit accrued, both to private persons and the public; that it was the strength of those countries, which admitted the practice of it; and the chief defence of justice and liberty. Witness the salutiferous amours of Harmodius and Aristogiton. They therefore call it sacred and divine, and think that it has no enemy but the violence of tyrants, and the cowardice of the common people. In short, all that can be allowed in favour of the academy, is to say, that it was an amour which terminated in friendship; and this also agrees well enough with the stoical definition of love. *Amorem conatum esse amicitiae faciendæ ex pulchritudinis specie*.\* “That love is an endeavour of contracting friendship by the splendour of beauty.”

The completest friendship characterised.

I return to my definition of a species of friendship that is juster and more uniform than what has been mentioned. *Omnino amicitiae, corroboratis jam confirmatis ingeniis, et ætatibus, judicandæ sunt*† “There is no judging of friendship till the persons are arrived to the maturity of years and understanding.” As for the rest, what we commonly call friends and friendship are but acquaintances contracted, either occasionally or for some advantage, by means of which there happens an agreement of our minds: but in the friendship I am treating of, our souls mingle and interweave themselves one with another so universally, that there is no more sign of the cement, by which they were first joined together. If I am pressed to give a reason why I loved him, I find it cannot be expressed otherwise than by saying,

\* Cic. Tusc. Quæst. lib. iv. cap. 34.

† Cic. de Amicitia, cap. 20.

“Because it was he: because it was I.” There was I know not what unaccountable power of destiny that brought about this union, beyond all that I can say in general or particular. We sought for, before we saw, each other by the characters we heard one of another, which wrought more upon our affections than, in reason, mere reports should do. I think, by some secret appointment of heaven, we loved to hear each other named. At our first meeting, which was accidental at a city feast, we were all at once so taken with each other, so well acquainted, and so mutually obliging, that from thence-forward nothing was so dear to us as the one to the other. He wrote an excellent Latin satire, which is published, wherein he excuses and accounts for the suddenness of our acquaintance, and its being so soon brought to maturity.\* He said, that it being like to have so short a continuance, as it was contracted so late in life (for we were both full grown men, and he the oldest by a year or two), there was no time to lose; nor was it to be regulated by the pattern of those effeminate and formal friendships, that require so many precautions of a long preliminary conversation.

This is no other idea than that of itself, and can have no relation but to itself. It is not one particular consideration, nor two, nor three, nor four, nor a thousand. It is I know not what quintessence of all this mixture, which, having engrossed my whole will, carried it to be plunged and absorbed in his; and which, having engrossed all his will, brought it back with the like appetite and concurrence, to be plunged and absorbed in mine. I may truly say absorbed, having reserved nothing to ourselves that was our own, or that was either his or mine. When Lælius, in presence of the Roman consuls (who, after they had condemned Tiberius Gracchus, prosecuted all those who had held a correspondence with

\* See Plutarch in the life of Tiberius and Caius Gracchus, chap. 5, Valer. Max. lib. iv. cap. 7, in Exemplis Romanis, sect. 1.

him), came to ask Caius Blossius, who was his chief friend, "What he would have done for him?" And that he made answer, "Every thing." "How! every thing!" continued he: "And what if he had commanded thee to set fire to our temples?" "He would never have laid that command on me," replied Blossius: "But what if he had?" said Lælius: "Why, if he had," said the other, "I would have obeyed him." If he was so perfect a friend to Gracchus as history reports him to have been, he was under no necessity of offending the consuls by such a bold confession as the last, and might still have retained the assurance he had of Gracchus's good will. Nevertheless they who accuse this as a seditious answer, do not well understand this mystery, nor suppose what is a fact; that he was now master of Gracchus's will, both by the power of a friend, and the knowledge he had of the man. They were more friends than citizens, and more friends to one another than either friends or enemies to their country, or than friends to ambition and disturbance. Having absolutely resigned themselves to one another, each perfectly held the reins of the other's inclination, which also they governed by virtue, and guided by reason (without which it were altogether impossible to draw in the harness). Blossius's answer was such as it ought to have been. If either acted hand over head, they were not friends according to my notion, either one to the other, or to their own dear selves. As for the rest, this answer carries no worse sound than mine would do, if any one should ask me, if my will commanded me to kill my daughter, would I kill her? and I should make answer that I would; for this carries no evidence of consent to do it. Because I do not in the least suspect my own will, and as little that of such a friend. It is not in the power of all the arguments in the world to dispossess me of the certainty I have of the intentions and opinions of my friends; nay, no one action of his, what face soever it might bear, could be represented to

me, of which I could not immediately discover the motive. Our souls have kept so even a pace together, and we have with such a fervent affection laid open the very bottom of our hearts to one another's view, that I not only know his as well as I do my own, but should certainly much rather trust my interest with him than with myself.

Let no one therefore rank other common friendships with such a one as this. Of those I have had as much experience as any one, and of the most perfect too of their kind: but I am not for confounding the rules of the one with the other, which whoever were guilty of, would find himself deceived. In those other ordinary friendships, a man must act with great prudence, precaution, and circumspection, the knot of such friendships being not so strong that a man can be sure it will not slip: "Love him," said Chilon,\* "as if you were one day to hate him; and hate him as if you were one day to love him." This precept, though so abominable in the sovereign friendship I am treating of, is of service in the practice of the ordinary common friendships, to which may most justly be applied an exclamation often used by Aristotle,† viz. "ὦ φίλοι, ἕδεῖς φίλος," "O my friends! there is no friend!"

The idea of common friendship.

In this sublime state of friendship, so hearty is the concurrence of our wills, that the offices and benefits, which are the support of the inferior class of friendships, do not deserve so much as to be mentioned here; for in the very same manner as the friendship I bear to myself receives no increase,

Amongst friends all things are common.

\* In Aulus Gellius, lib. i. cap. 3. Diogenes Laertius, in the life of Bias, attributes this saying to that wise man, lib. i. sect. 7, as Aristotle had done before, in his Rhetoric, lib. ii. cap. 13, where we read the second article, viz. "That a man should be hated, as if some day hereafter he should be loved;" which is not in Diogenes Laertius. As to the first article, "That a man should only be loved as if he were some day to be hated." Cicero says, that he cannot imagine such an expression came from Bias, one of the seven wise men. De Amicitia, cap. 16.

† Diogenes Laertius, in the Life of Aristotle, lib. v. sect. 21.

whatever I relieve myself withal in a case of necessity (say the Stoics what they will), and as I do not find myself obliged to myself, for the service I do to myself: so the union of such friends being truly perfect, makes them insensible of such obligations, and causes them to loath and banish from their conversation the words benefit, obligation, acknowledgment, entreaty, thanks, and the like terms of distinction and difference. Every thing being in effect common between them; as thoughts, judgments, estates, wives, children, honour, and life, and their agreement being as entire as if it was but one soul in two bodies, they cannot be said, according to Aristotle's very proper definition,\* either to lend or give any thing to one another. This is the very reason why the legislators, to honour marriage with some imaginary resemblance of this divine union, prohibit all gifts between the husband and wife, by which they would have it inferred, that all they both had, ought to be the property of each; and that they have nothing of which to make a separate dividend.

In perfect  
friendship  
the giver is  
obliged to  
the re-  
ceiver.

If, in the friendship of which I treat, the one could give to the other, he, who receives the favour, would thereby lay his companion under the obligation; for each of them seeking above all things to be useful to one another, he that furnishes the matter and the occasion, is the liberal man, in giving his friend the satisfaction of doing that for him which he most desires. When the philosopher, Diogenes, wanted money, he said, "that he re-demanded it of his friends, and not demanded it."† And to let you see a full proof of this practice, I will here relate an instance of it in ancient history, which is very singular. Eudamidas, a Corinthian, who was a poor man, had two friends who were wealthy, viz. Charixenus a Syconian, and Aretheus a Corinthian, to

\* Diog. Laer. in the Life of Aristotle, lib. v. sect. 20.

† Diog. Laer. in the Life of Diogenes the Cynic, lib. vi. sect. 46.

whom, on his death-bed, he left these legacies by his last will and testament, viz.\* “ I leave it to Aretheus “ to keep my mother, and to maintain her in her old “ age ; to Charixenus to provide a husband for my “ daughter, and to give her as good a portion as he “ can, and in case one of these friends happens to “ die, I substitute the survivor in his place.” They who first saw this will, made themselves very merry with it, but his executors, being made acquainted with it, accepted of the trust with a particular pleasure : and one of them, viz. Charixenus, dying within five days after, Aretheus, on whom the charge of both thereby devolved, took special care of the mother, and, of five talents, which he had in the bank, he gave two and a half in marriage with an only daughter he had of his own, and the other two and a half in marriage with the daughter of Eudamidas, whose nuptials were both solemnized on the same day.

This instance is very full to the point, were it not for one objection, viz. the number of friends. For the perfect friendship whereof I am speaking is indivisible. Each of the two gives himself up so entirely to his friend, that he has nothing left to dispose of elsewhere ; on the contrary, he is sorry that he is not double, treble, or quadruple, and that he has not a plurality of souls and of wills, to confer them all upon this subject.

As for the ordinary friendships, they are divisible. One may love the beauty of this, the courtesy of that person, the liberality of a third, the paternal affection of one, the brotherly love of another, and so of the rest ; but as for this friendship which engrosses the whole soul, and governs it with absolute sway, it is impossible it should be twofold. If two at the same time should call on you for help, to which of them would you run ? If they desired contrary offices

\* This instance is taken from a Dialogue of Lucian entitled *Toxaris*.



of you, how would you order it? Should the one charge you with the keeping of a secret, which it was proper they both should know, how would you come off?

A singular  
and prime  
friendship,  
dissolves  
all other  
obliga-  
tions.

The friendship which is of the singular and sovereign kind, dissolves all other obligations. The secret, which I have sworn not to reveal to another, I may without perjury communicate to him who is not another, but myself. It is miraculous enough for a man to double himself, but they who talk of trebling themselves know not what they say. Nothing is extreme that has its like; and whoever supposes, that of two persons, I love one as much as the other, and that they mutually love another, and love me as much as I love them, he multiplies into a fraternity, the greatest and most single of units, of which one alone is also the rarest thing in the world to find. The remaining part of this story agrees very well with what I was saying; for Eudamidas, as a grace and favour to his friends, employs them in his necessity, and leaves them heirs to this liberality of his, which consists in giving them an opportunity of doing him a good office. And, without doubt, the power of friendship is more eminently apparent in this action of his, than in that of Aretheus. In fine, these are effects not to be imagined by such as have not had experience of them, and therefore I highly honour the answer of the young soldier to Cyrus, who, when he asked him what he would take for a horse, with which he had just won the prize at a race, and whether he would exchange him for a kingdom? "No, truly, Sir," said he, "but I would freely part with him to gain a friend, could I find a man worthy of such a relation."\* He was right enough in saying, "could I find," for though it is an easy matter to find persons qualified for a superficial acquaintance, yet, in such a league of friendship as this, wherein the negotiation is carried on from the

\* Cyropædia, lib. viii. cap. 3, sect. 11, 12.

very bottom of the heart, without any reserve, it is requisite that all the springs and movements of it should be clear and perfectly sure.

In confederacies which hold but by one end, or have but one point to serve, there needs nothing more than to make provision for the imperfections which particularly concern that end. It can be of no moment what religion my physician is of, or my lawyer, this being a consideration quite foreign to the offices of friendship, which they owe me. What is necessary in confederacies.

I am altogether as indifferent in regard to my domestic acquaintance with my servants: I am not so inquisitive to know whether my footman be chaste, as whether he be diligent; and am not so much in fear that my chairman is a gamester, as that he is weak; or my cook a swearer, as that he is ignorant. I do not take upon me to dictate what others should do; there are enough that are guilty of this. I only give an account of what I do in my own house: And in domestic acquaintance.

*Mihi sic usus est; Tibi ut opus est facto, face.\**

This has my practice been; but thou may'st do,  
What interest or pleasure prompts thee to.

In table-talk, I prefer the merry man before the wise one; in bed, beauty before goodness; and in common conversation, the most able speaker, even though he does not always mean what he says; and so of other things. If he that was found riding on a hobby-horse,† at play with his children, desired the man, who surprised him at it, to say nothing of the matter till he came to be a father himself, imagining, that the passion of fondness, which would then arise in his soul, would render him a more proper judge of such an action; so I would wish to be read by such as have had experience of what I say; but knowing

\* Terence Heaut. act 1, scene 1, ver. 28.

† It was Agesilaus who was found thus playing with his children. Plutarch in the Life of Agesilaus, cap. 9.

how different such friendship is from the way of the world, and how hard it is to be found, I do not expect to meet with any person qualified to be a judge of the thing. For even those discourses, left us on this subject by the ancients, are flat and languid, according to my notion of the matter. And in this point the effects surpass the precepts of philosophy :

*Nil ego contulerim jucundo sanus amico.\**

I know no pleasure that can health attend,  
Equal to that of a facetious friend.

Menander pronounced that man happy who had the good fortune to meet with the shadow of a friend :† and indeed he had good reason for saying so, if he spoke by experience. For, in truth, if I compare all the rest of my life, though, God be thanked, I have always lived easy and pleasant, and (excepting the loss of such a friend) exempt from any grievous affliction, and in great tranquillity of mind, having been contented with my natural and original conveniences, without being solicitous for others, if I compare it all, I say, to those four years that I had the enjoyment of the sweet conversation of this excellent man, it is all but smoke, and one dark tedious night. From the day that I lost him

——— *Quem semper acerbum,  
Semper honoratum (sic Dii voluistis) habeo.‡*

Which, since 'tis heav'n's decree, though too severe,  
I shall lament, but ever shall revere.

I have only languished in life, and the very pleasures that present themselves to me, instead of comforting me, double my affliction for the loss of him. We were half sharers in every thing ; and, methinks, by outliving him, I defraud him of his share :

\* Hor. lib. i. sat. 5, ver. 44.

† Plutarch, in his Tract of Brotherly Love, cap. 3.

‡ Virg. Æneid, lib. v. ver. 49, 50.

*Nec \* jus esse ulla me voluptate hic frui  
Decrevi, tantisper dum ille abest, meus particeps.†*

No pleasing thought shall e'er my soul employ,  
While he is absent who was all my joy.

I was actually so constituted, and so accustomed to be his second part at all times and places, that, methinks, I have but one half of myself left :

*Ah ! te meæ si partem animæ rapit  
Maturior vis, quid moror altera,  
Nec charus æque, nec superstes  
Integer ? Ille dies utramque  
Ducet ruinam.‡*

Should you, alas ! be snatch'd away,  
Wherefore, ah ! wherefore should I stay :  
My comfort lost, myself not whole,  
And but possessing half my soul !  
One fatal day shall seize on both.

There is no action or imagination of mine wherein I do not miss him, as much as if he had been really created for me ; for as he infinitely surpassed me in virtue, and every other accomplishment, he also did the same in the duties of friendship :

*Quis desiderio sit pudor, aut modus  
Tam chari capitis ? §*

Why should we stop the flowing tear ?  
Why blush to weep for one so dear ?

*O misero, frater adempte, mihi !  
Omnia tecum una perierunt gaudia nostra,  
Quæ tuas in vita, dulcis alevat amor.  
Tu mea, tu moriens fregisti commoda, frater,  
Tecum una tota est nostra sepulta anima.  
Cujus ego interitu tota de mente fugavi  
Hæc studia, atque omnes delicias animi.  
Alloquor ? audiero nunquam tua verba loquentem ?  
Nunquam ego te vita, frater amabilior,  
Aspiciam posthac ? at certe semper amabo. ||*

\* Montaigne has here made some little variation in Terence's words, for the sake of applying them to his subject.

† Terence Heaut. act 1, scene 1, ver. 97, 98.

‡ Hor. lib. ii. ode xvii. ver. 5, &c.

§ Hor. lib. i. ode xxiv. ver. 1, 2.

|| Catullus, eclogue lxvi. ver. 20—26. Eclog. lxiii. ver. 9, 10, 11.

Ah ! brother, what a life did I commence,  
 From that sad day when thou wast snatch'd from hence !  
 Those joys are vanish'd which my heart once knew,  
 When in sweet converse all our moments flew ;  
 With thee departing, my good fortune fled,  
 And all my soul is lifeless since thou'rt dead.  
 The Muses at thy fun'ral I forsook,  
 And of all joy my leave for ever took.  
 Dearer than life ! am I so wretched then,  
 Never to hear or speak to thee again ?  
 Nor see those lips, now frozen up by death ?  
 Yet I will love thee to my latest breath !

But let us hear a little what this lad of sixteen years of age says ; “ Having discovered that those  
 “ memoirs, upon the famous edict of January (men-  
 “ tioned towards the beginning of this chapter), are  
 “ already printed, and with a bad design, by some,  
 “ who make it their business to molest and to sub-  
 “ vert the state of our government, not caring  
 “ whether they amend it or no, and that they  
 “ have published it in a miscellany of other pieces  
 “ of their own writing, I desisted from my design  
 “ of inserting it here. And to the end that the  
 “ memory of the author may not suffer with such as  
 “ were not intimate enough with him to have a  
 “ thorough knowledge of his opinions and his per-  
 “ formances, I hereby give him to understand, that  
 “ this subject was treated by him in his youth, and  
 “ that only by way of exercising his genius, it being  
 “ a common subject that has been canvassed by  
 “ writers in a thousand places. I make no doubt  
 “ but he himself believed what he writ, being so  
 “ very conscientious that he would not be guilty of  
 “ telling a lie, even in jest ; and I know, moreover,  
 “ that if it had been put to his choice, that he had  
 “ rather have been born at Venice than at Scarlac,  
 “ and he had reason. But he had another maxim  
 “ deeply imprinted in his mind, very religiously to  
 “ obey and submit to the laws under which he was  
 “ born. There never was a better subject, nor a  
 “ greater well-wisher to the tranquillity of his

“ country, nor one that more opposed the com-  
 “ motions and innovations of the time he lived in,  
 “ so that he would much rather have employed his  
 “ talents to suppress them, than to have inflamed  
 “ them more; for he had a mind formed after the  
 “ model of other times than these. Now, in ex-  
 “ change for this serious piece, I will present you  
 “ with another that is more gay and airy, written by  
 “ the same hand, at the same age.”

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## CHAPTER XXVIII.

*A Letter to Madam de Grammont, Countess of  
 Guisén, with twenty-nine Sonnets.*

MADAM, I offer your ladyship nothing of mine, either because it is already yours, or because I find nothing of my writing worthy of you: but I was desirous that these verses, into what part of the world soever they travel, may carry your name in the front, for the honour that will accrue to them, by having the great Corisanda de Andonis for their guide. I conceive this present, Madam, the more proper for you, forasmuch as there are but few ladies in France who have a better taste of poetry, and make a better use of it, than you; and none who can give it that life and spirit which your ladyship does, by that sweet and graceful melody in your voice, of which, among a million of other charms, nature has made you a present. These verses, Madam, are worthy of your patronage, and I dare say you will be of my opinion, that Gascony never yielded any that had more imagination and elegance, or that carry the marks of a more copious fancy. And do not be jealous that you have but the remainder of what I published under the patronage of M. de Foix, your worthy kinsman; for really, these have something in them of more life and fire, forasmuch as he

wrote them in his greener years; and when he was inflamed with a certain noble ardour, which, one day or other, I will whisper in your ear. The others were written afterwards, when he was making courtship to his wife, and savouring already of a certain matrimonial coldness. For my part, I am of the same opinion with those, who think that poetry appears no where so gay as it does on a wanton and irregular subject. These twenty-nine sonnets of Stephen de Boetius, which were inserted in this letter formerly,\* have since been printed with his works.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### *Of Moderation.*

**T**HINGS which are in themselves fair and good, are liable to be spoiled by our handling, as if there was something infectious in our very touch. Virtue itself will become vice if we clasp it with a desire too eager and violent. As for saying that there is never any excess of virtue, because it is no longer virtue if there be excess in it, it is mere playing upon words:

Whether  
virtue can  
be sought  
after with  
too much  
vehemency.

*Insani sapiens nomen ferat, æquus iniqui,  
Ultra quàm salis est, virtutem si petat ipsam.\**

Mad grows the wise, the just unjust is found,  
When e'en to virtue they prescribe no bound.

This is a subtle consideration in philosophy. A man may both be too much in love with virtue, and carry himself to excess in a just action. Holy writ agrees

\* They are inserted in Abel Angelier's quarto edition, printed at Paris in 1588. I do not swell this edition with them, because I do not find any thing in them that is very affecting; for they scarce contain any thing in them but amorous complaints, expressed in a very rough style, discovering the follies and outrages of a restless passion, overgorged, as it were, with jealousies, fears, and suspicions.

† Hor. lib. i. epist. 6.

with this way of thinking. St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, ch. xii. ver. 3. "No man should think of himself more highly than he ought, but think soberly." I knew a great man who blemished his reputation for religion, by making a show of greater devotion than all men of his condition.\* I love natures that are temperate, and between the extremes.

An immoderate zeal, even for that which is good, though it does not offend me, astonishes me; and I really am at a loss what name to give it. Neither the mother of Pausanias,† who first pointed out the way, and laid the first stone for the destruction of her son; nor the dictator Posthumius, who put his son to death, whom the heat of youthful blood had pushed with success upon the enemy a little before the other sol-

An immoderate zeal for that which is good.

\* It is like that Montaigne meant Henry III. king of France. The Cardinal d' Ossat, writing to Louisa, his Queen Dowager, told her, in his frank manner, that he had lived as much or more like a monk than a monarch. Letter xxiii. And Sextus Quintus speaking of that prince one day to the Cardinal de Joyeuse, protector of the affairs of France, said to him pleasantly, "There is nothing that your king hath not done, and does not do still, to be a monk, nor any thing that I have not done, not to be a monk." See the note by Amelot de la Houssaye upon the words of the Cardinal d' Ossat, just now mentioned, p. 74, tom. i. of the Cardinal d' Ossat's Letters, published at Paris in 1698.

† Montaigne would here give us to understand, upon the authority of Diodorus of Sicily, that Pausanias's mother gave the first hint of the punishment that was to be inflicted on her son. "Pausanias," says this historian, "perceiving that the ephori, and some other Lacedæmonians aimed at apprehending him, got the start of them, and went and took sanctuary in Minerva's temple: and the Lacedæmonians, being doubtful whether they ought to take him from thence in violation of the franchise there, it is said that his own mother came herself to the temple, but spoke nothing, nor did any thing more than lay a piece of brick, which she brought with her, on the threshold of the temple, which, when she had done, she returned home. The Lacedæmonians, taking the hint from the mother, caused the gate of the temple to be walled up, and by this means starved Pausanias, so that he died with hunger, &c." lib. xi. cap. 10 of Amyot's translation. The name of Pausanias's mother was Alcithæa, as we are informed by Thucydides's scholiast, who only says that it was reported, that when they set about walling up the gates of the chapel in which Pausanias had taken refuge, his mother Alcithæa laid the first stone.



diers of his rank ;\* neither of these instances, I say, seem to me so just as they are strange ; and I should not like either to advise or imitate a virtue, so savage, and so expensive. The archer that shoots beyond the mark misses it as much as he that comes short of it. And it offends my sight as much to lift up my eyes, on a sudden, towards a great light, as to cast them down to a dark cavern. Callicles, in Plato, says, that the extremity of philosophy is hurtful, and advises not to dive deeper into it than what may turn to good account ; that, taken with moderation, it is pleasant and profitable, but, in the extreme, it renders a man brutish and vicious, a contemner of religion and the common laws, an enemy to civil conversation, and all human pleasures, incapable of all political administration, and of assisting others, or even himself, and a fit object to be buffeted with impunity. And he says true ; for in its excess it enslaves our natural liberty, and, by an impertinent curiosity, leads us out of the fair and smooth path, which has been planned out for us by nature.

Love to  
wives re-  
strained by  
divinity.

Though the love we bear to our wives is very lawful, yet divinity curbs and restrains it. I think I have formerly met with a passage in St. Thomas Aquinas, where he condemns marriages within the prohibited degrees of consanguinity, for this, among other reasons, viz. the danger there is lest the love a husband bears to such a wife should be immoderate ;

\* Opinions differ as to the truth of this fact. Titus Livius thinks he has good authority for rejecting it, because it does not appear in history that Posthumius was branded with it, as Titus Manlius was, about 100 years after his time ; for Manlius, having put his son to death for the like cause, obtained the odious name of Imperiosus, and since that time Manliana Imperia has been used as a term to signify orders that are too severe ; Manliana Imperia, says Titus Livius, were not only horrible for the time present, but of a bad example to posterity. And this historian makes no doubt but such commands would have been actually styled Posthumiana Imperia, if Posthumius had been the first who set so barbarous an example. Titus Livius, lib. iv. cap. 29, and lib. viii. cap. 7. But, however, Montaigne has Valer. Maximus on his side, who says expressly, that Posthumius caused his son to be put to death, lib. ii. cap. 766, and Diodorus of Sicily, lib. xii. cap. 19.

for if the conjugal affection be as entire and perfect as it ought, and it be increased, moreover, by that which is due to consanguinity, there is no doubt but such an addition would carry the husband beyond the bounds of reason.

The sciences which regulate the manners of mankind, viz. theology and philosophy, dictate in every thing. There is no action, be it ever so private and secret, that can escape their cognizance and jurisdiction. This liberty assumed by philosophy and theology,\* is what none but the ignorant and the vulgar take it in their heads to find fault with: and in this they are like the wives who expose their parts freely enough to their gallants, but are shy of discovering them to the physician or the surgeon. I will therefore, on the part of philosophy and divinity,† give this lesson to the husbands, if such there be who are too libidinous in the conjugal state, viz. That the very pleasures they enjoy in their converse with their wives, are blameable if immoderate, and that a licentious and intemperate abuse of it is as great an error with a legitimate subject as with one that is illegitimate. As for the immodest caresses which the first ardour suggests to us in this affair, there is not only an indecency in employing them with our wives, but a detriment. Let them at least learn impudence from another hand. They are always alert enough for our occasions. The instruction I have made use of is perfectly natural and plain.

Marriage is a solemn and sacred tie; therefore the pleasure we extract from it should be temperate and

\* If this be the sense of Montaigne's words, as I think it to be, Mr. Cotton, in his English translation, has very much mistaken it, where he says, "But they are best taught, who are best able to censure and curb their own liberty." This is a construction which does not tally at all with what goes before, and much less with what follows.

† Here the English translator is likewise mistaken, where he says, "I will on the behalf of the wives teach the husband, &c." Few wives would think themselves obliged to thank Montaigne for such a lesson to their husbands.

serious, with a mixture of gravity. It ought to be a pleasure in some sort discreet and conscientious.

Congress  
with preg-  
nant wo-  
men prohi-  
bited.

The chief end of it being generation, it is a matter of doubt with some people, whether, when there are no hopes of issue, as when women are past the age of child-bearing, or when they are actually pregnant, it is lawful to court their embraces. It is homicide, according to Plato, (*De Legibus*, lib. viii. p. 912, C. Francofurti, apud Claudium Maraium, &c. anno 1602). Certain nations, and particularly the Mahometans, abominate conjunction with women that are already with child; and many also with those that are in the menstrual terms.

Conjugal  
continency.

Zenobia would never admit her husband for more than one encounter, after which she left him to take his range abroad, during the whole time of her conception, and only allowed him to come to her bed again after she was delivered.\* A noble and generous example this in the married state!† It must certainly be from some poor but very lascivious poet, that Plato‡ borrowed the following story, viz. That Jupiter was one day so hot upon his wife, that not having patience to stay till she was in bed, he threw her down upon the floor, where, so vehement was his pleasure, that he forgot the great and important resolutions which he had just entered into with the other gods, in his celestial court, and boasted that he had as much pleasure in that bout, as when he first got her maidenhead unknown to their parents.

Wives of  
the kings of  
Persia how  
received at

The Persian monarchs invited their wives to their feasts; but when the wine began to operate in good earnest, and that they could not help giving a loose

\* Montaigne has taken this passage from Trebellius Pollio's Zenobia, p. 199, Hist. August.

† Plutarch, in his Matrimonial Precepts, sect. 14.

‡ Montaigne here ridicules Homer without thinking of it, for this fiction is undoubtedly taken from the *Iliad*, lib. xiv. ver. 194, 353. See Plato's Republic, lib. iii. p. 433, printed at Lyons, by William Leemar, in 1590. If Montaigne had looked into Homer, he would not have been so mistaken as he has been in some circumstances of this affair.

to pleasure; they sent them back to their private <sup>their festi-</sup> apartments, that they might not participate in their <sup>vals.</sup> immoderate lust, and sent for other women in their stead, to whom they were not obliged to pay so much respect. All pleasures and gratifications do not suit all persons. Epaminondas having caused a debauched youth to be imprisoned, Pelopidas begged that, for his sake, he would grant him his liberty.\* He refused the favour to Pelopidas, but granted it at the first word to a wench of his who made the same intercession, saying, "that it was a gratification due to a mistress, but not to a captain." Sophocles, passing along by accident, cried out, "Oh! what a delicate boy is that!" whereupon Pericles said to him, this would do well for any body but a prætor, who ought not only to have clean hands but chaste eyes.†

Ælius Verus, the emperor, when his empress re- <sup>Conjugal</sup> proached him with his love to other women, told her <sup>love ought</sup> that a principle of conscience was his motive for it, <sup>to be ac-</sup> forasmuch as marriage was a state of honour and dig- <sup>companied</sup> nity,‡ and not of toying and lascivious concupis- <sup>with re-</sup> cence. And our church history holds the memory <sup>spect.</sup> of that wife in great veneration, who parted with her husband rather than comply with and bear his indecent and inordinate dalliances. In short, there is no pleasure how justifiable soever, wherein we are not blameable for taking it with excess and intemperance.

But to speak the truth, is not man a wretched <sup>Man a mi-</sup> animal. It is scarce in his power, by his state of <sup>serable</sup> nature, to taste a single pleasure pure and entire; <sup>creature.</sup> and yet he is labouring for arguments to curtail that imperfect pleasure he has: he is not yet wretched

\* Plutarch in his instructions to those who manage state affairs, chap. 9. Amyot's translation.

† Cic. de Offic. lib. i. cap. 40.

‡ Æli. Spartiani Ælius Verus, p. 15, 16. Hist. Augusti in folio, printed at Paris, anno 1620.

enough, unless by art and study he increases his own misery :

*Fortunæ miseras auximus arte vides.\**

We with misfortune 'gainst ourselves take part,  
And our sad destiny increase by art.

Human wisdom makes a very foolish use of its talents, by exercising them in abating the number and relish of those pleasures which we have a right to ; as, on the other hand, it acts favourably and industriously in employing its skill to put a gloss and disguise upon the misfortunes of life to alleviate the sense of them. Had I been the chief manager, I should have taken another more natural course, which, to say the truth, is convenient and sacred, and perhaps I should have been able to set limits to it ; although our physicians, both spiritual and temporal, as if they had combined together, can find no other method of cure, or remedy for the diseases of the body and soul, than by torment, sorrow, and pain. To this end watchings, fastings, penances, far distant and solitary banishments, perpetual imprisonments, scourgings, and other afflictions, have been introduced into the world ; yea, and on such a condition, that they should be real afflictions, and carry a sting in their tails ; and that the consequence thereof should not be as happened to one Gallio,\* who, having been banished to the isle of Lesbos, news was brought to Rome, that he lived as merry there as the day was long, and that his banishment did not prove his punishment but his pleasure ; for this reason they thought fit to recall him to his wife and family, and confined him to his own house, to make him more sensible of their punishments.† For to the person whom fasting would make more healthful and sprightly, and to

\* Propert. lib. iii. eleg. ii. ver. 32.

† A Roman senator banished for having offended Tiberius, as may be seen in Tacit. Annals, lib. vi. cap. 2.

‡ According to Tacitus, he was recalled to Rome, to be kept there in the custody of the magistrates, *ibid.*

whose palate fish would be more agreeable than flesh, the prescription of either, medicinally, would be of no salutary effect, no more than drugs in the other sort of physic, which have no effect with him who takes them with an appetite and pleasure. The bitterness of the potion, and the aversion of the patient to it, are circumstances that conduce to the operation. Rhubarb itself would be of no virtue to the constitution which is used to it. It must be something which offends the stomach that must cure it; and here the common rule, that things are cured by their contraries, fails; for in this, one evil is cured by another.

This notion has some resemblance with that which was anciently embraced by all religions and sects, that massacre and homicide were acceptable to the gods and to nature. Even in the time of our forefathers, Amurath sacrificed 600 young Greeks to the manes of his father, with a view that their blood might serve as a propitiatory atonement for the sins of his deceased parent.

The sacrifice of human flesh a practice formerly in almost all religions.

And in those new countries discovered in this age of ours, which are pure as yet, and virgins, in comparison of ours, this practice is in some degree universally received. All their idols reek with human blood, not without sundry examples of horrid cruelty. Some they put alive into a fire, and take them half roasted out of it, to tear out their hearts and bowels: others, even women, they flea alive, and put their bloody skins on the bodies of others. There are also striking instances among them of constancy and resolution. For these poor victims, old men, women, and children, go out some days before to beg alms for the offering of their sacrifice, and present themselves to the slaughter, singing and dancing.

How practised in the new world.

Wonderful constancy of those who are sacrificed there.

The king of Mexico's ambassador, representing the great power of their master to Fernando Cortez, after having told him that he had 30 vassals, each of whom could assemble 100,000 fighting men, and that he kept his court in the fairest and best fortified city

The prodigious number sacrificed by the king of Mexico.

under the sun, added that he had 50,000 men to spare, every year, for a sacrifice to the gods. They actually affirm, that he maintained a war with some great neighbouring nations, not only for the exercise of the youths of the country, but chiefly to have prisoners of war enough for his sacrifices.

Compliment paid  
by the  
Americans  
to Fernan-  
do Cortez.

At a certain town, moreover, they sacrificed 50 men at one time for the welcome of Cortez, to which I will add this story. Some of these nations, being defeated by him, sent to compliment him, and to court his friendship; and the messenger carried him three sorts of presents, which they delivered him in this manner: Behold, lord, here are five slaves; if thou art a fierce god whose diet is flesh and blood, eat these, and we will bring thee more. If thou art a gracious god, here are plumes of feathers, and incense; but if thou art a man, take these fowls and fruits that we have brought thee.

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## CHAPTER XXX.

### *Of Cannibals.*

WHEN king Pyrrhus, upon his entrance into Italy, saw the order of the Roman army, that was sent to meet him,\* “I know not,” said he; “what kind of Barbarians (for so the Greeks call other nations) these may be; but the disposition of the army, which I now see, has nothing of the Barbarian in it.” The same was said by the Greeks concerning the army which Flaminius sent into their country; and by Philip, when he discovered, from an eminence, the order and distribution of the Roman camp, in his kingdom, under Publius Sulpitius Galba. By this it appears how cautious men ought

\* Plutarch, in the Life of Pyrrhus.

to be of taking things upon trust, from vulgar opinion, and that we are to judge by the eye of reason, and not from common report.

I had a man with me a long time, who had lived ten or twelve years in the world lately discovered, and that part of it surnamed Antarctic France. This discovery of so vast a country seems to be of very great importance; and we are not sure, that there may not be another discovered hereafter, so many greater men than we having been deceived in this. I am afraid that our eyes are bigger than our bellies, and that our curiosity is greater than our capacity. We grasp at every thing, and catch nothing but air.

Reflections  
on the dis-  
covery of  
the new  
world.

Plato introduces Solon\* telling a story which he had heard from the priests of Sais, in Egypt, that in old times, even before the flood, there was a great island called Atlantis, directly at the mouth of the strait of Gibraltar, which was bigger than Africa and Asia both together; and that the kings of this same country, who not only possessed this island, but had stretched themselves so far into the continent, that it extended the breadth of Africa as far as Egypt, and the length of Europe as far as Tuscany, attempted to encroach even upon Asia, and to subdue all the nations bordering on the Mediterranean Sea, to the gulf of the Black Sea, and for this purpose traversed Spain, Gaul, and Italy, even to Greece, where they were checked by the Athenians: but that some time after, both the Athenians and they, with their island, were swallowed by the deluge.

The island  
of Atlantis.

It is very probable that extraordinary inundations have made great changes in the earth, as it is said that Sicily was rent by the sea from the main land of Italy:

Deluges the  
cause of  
great alte-  
rations in  
the habita-  
ble world.

*(Hæc loca vi quondam, et vastâ convulsu ruina,*

*Dissiluisse ferunt: cum protinus utraque tellus  
Una foret.†*

\* In the Dialogue, entitled *Timæus*, p. 524, 525.

† Virg. *Æn. lib. iii. ver. 414, 416, 417.*



'Tis said that by an earthquake or a flood,  
Too great and boisterous to be withstood,  
Those places were from one another rent,  
Which were before one solid continent.)

Cyprus from Syria; the isle of Negropont from the main land of Bœotia; and in other parts joined lands together that before were separate, filling up the channels that were between them with mud and sand:

— *Sterilesve diu palus, aptaque remis,  
Vicinas urbes alit, et grave sentit aratrum.\**

Marshes long barren, where they boats did row,  
Feed neighb'ring cities and admit the plough.

*Columbus by sea  
1492*  
But it is not very probable that the new world, lately discovered, was that island; for it almost touched upon Spain; and that an inundation should have forced such a prodigious tract so far off, as above 1200 leagues from it, is incredible; besides that, our modern navigators have already, in a manner, discovered it to be no island, but Terra Firma, and joining to the East Indies on one side, and with the lands under the two poles on the other; or if it be separated from them, that it is by too narrow a streight and interval, to deserve the name of an island. It seems that in those great bodies, as it is in ours, there are two motions, some natural, others febrific. When I consider the impression that has been made in my time, by our river Dordoigne, towards the right-hand side as it runs down, and that, in these twenty years past, it has gained so much, and sapped the foundation of many buildings, I plainly perceive it to be owing to some extraordinary agitation; for if it had always taken this course, or was to do so hereafter, the present figure of the world would be totally changed. But rivers are apt to alter their course: sometimes they overflow on one side, sometimes on the other, and at other times quietly keep their channels. I do not speak of sud-

\* Hor. de Art. Poet. ver. 65, 66.

den inundations, the cause of which we clearly know. In Medoc, by the sea-side, my brother, the Sieur d'Arfac, sees an estate he had there buried under the sands thrown up by the sea, where the tops of some houses are yet to be seen; his revenues and domains are converted into poor pastures. The inhabitants say, that for some years past, the sea has drove so vehemently upon their coast, that they have lost four leagues of land. These sands are harbingers of its approach. And we now see great shoals of moving sands, that roll on half a league before it, and make a lodgment on the country.

The other testimony of antiquity, which some produce for this discovery, is in Aristotle, at least if that little history of miracles be his. He there says, that certain Carthaginians, having crossed the Atlantic Sea beyond the strait of Gibraltar, after a long navigation, discovered a great fruitful island, covered all over with wood, and watered with broad deep rivers; far remote from any main land; and that they, and others after them, allured by the goodness and fertility of the soil, went thither with their wives and children, and began to plant a colony. But the senate of Carthage, perceiving their country by degrees grow thin of people, issued out an express prohibition, that no more should transport themselves thither, upon pain of death, and also expelled the new inhabitants, for fear, as it is said, lest, in process of time, they should multiply to such a degree, as to supplant themselves, and ruin their state. But this relation of Aristotle's no more agrees with our new-found country than the other.

An island discovered by the Carthaginians.

This domestic of mine is a plain honest fellow, and therefore the more likely to tell truth. Your men of fine parts, indeed, are much more curious in their observations, and discover more particulars, but then they make comments upon them, and to give the better air to their glosses, and to gain them credit, they cannot help making a little alteration in the story. They never represent things to you simply

The qualities requisite in an historian.

as they are, but turn and wind them according to the light they appeared in to themselves; and in order to gain a reputation to their judgment, and to draw you in to trust it, they are apt to lengthen and amplify the subject with something of their own invention. Either a man must be of undoubted veracity, or so simple that he has not wherewithal to contrive to give an air of truth to fiction, and who is wedded to no opinion. Such a one was my man; and besides, he has divers times showed me several sailors and merchants, who went the same voyage with him. Therefore I content myself with his information, without inquiring what the cosmographers say of it.

Advice to authors to write no more on a subject than what they know of it.

We would have topographers to give us a particular account of the places where they were. But because they have had this advantage over us, of seeing the Holy Land, they would have the privilege, forsooth, of telling us stories of all the other parts of the world. I would have every one write what he knows, and as much as he knows of it, not only on this, but on all other subjects. For a man may have some particular knowledge or experience of the nature of such a river, or such a spring, who, as to other things, knows no more than any other person; and, nevertheless, for the sake of propagating this smattering knowledge of his, he will undertake to write a whole history of natural philosophy. A vice which is the source of several great inconveniences.

Barbarism, what it is taken for.

To return to my subject: I do not find, by what I am told, that there is any thing wild and barbarous in this nation, excepting that every one gives the denomination of barbarism to what is not the custom of his country. As indeed we have no other level for aiming at truth and reason, but the example and idea of the opinions and customs of the country wherein we live. There is always the true religion, there is perfect government, and there the use of all things is complete and perfect. There the people

are wild, just as we call fruits wild which nature produces of itself, and in its ordinary progress; whereas in truth we ought rather to call those wild whose natures we have changed by our artifice, and diverted from the common order: in the former, their genuine and most useful and natural virtues and properties are vigorous and sprightly, but the latter are degenerated by our accommodating them to the pleasure of our corrupted taste. And yet our palates ever find a flavour and delicacy, excellent even to emulation of the best of ours, in several fruits of those countries that grow without cultivation.

It is not reasonable that art should gain the pre-eminence of our great and powerful mother, Nature. We have so surcharged the beauty and richness of her works by our own inventions, that we have almost smothered her. Yet wherever she shines in her own pure lustre, she wonderfully disgraces our vain and frivolous attempts:

*Et veniunt hederæ sponte sua melius,  
Surgit et in solis formosior arbutus antris,*

*Et volucres nulla dulcius arte canunt.\**

Best thrives the ivy when no culture spoils;  
The strawb'rry most delights in shaded soils;  
Birds in wild notes their throats harmonious stretch  
With greater art than art itself can teach.

With all our skill, we are not able to frame such a nest as that of the least of the small birds, neither for its contexture, beauty, or convenience; nor can we weave such a web as the poor spider does. All things, says Plato,† are produced either by nature, chance, or art. The largest and the most beautiful by one or other of the two first, the least and most imperfect by the last.

These nations then seem to me to be so far barbarous, as very little care has been taken to form their minds, and as their native simplicity is still unim-

Nature superior to art,

In what sense the American savages are barbarians

\* Propert. lib. i. eleg. ii. ver. 10, 11, 15. † Plato de Legibus, 665.

proved. They are still governed by the laws of nature, as yet very little adulterated by ours, but remaining in such purity, that I am sometimes sorry we were not acquainted with the people sooner, when there were men better able to judge of them than we are. I am vexed that Lycurgus and Plato had no knowledge of them: for, in my opinion, what we see in those nations by experience, not only surpasses all the pictures which the poets have drawn of the Golden Age, and all their inventions in representing the then happy state of mankind, but also the conception and desire of philosophy itself. Such a native and pure simplicity as we see in them, could never enter into their imagination, nor could they ever believe that society could be maintained with so little human artifice and cement.

The excellency of their policy.

Should I say to Plato, it is a nation wherein there is no sort of traffic, no knowledge of letters, no science of numbers, no title of magistracy, nor of political superiority; no use of service, riches, or poverty; no contracts, no successions, no dividends, no occupations, no respect of kindred, but all common; no clothes, no agriculture, no metal, no use of wine or corn; and that they never heard the mention of such words as signify lying, treason, dissimulation, avarice, envy, detraction, and pardon, how far would he find his imaginary republic short of this perfection?

*Hos natura modos primum dedit.\**

These diff'rent ways were first by nature taught.

The nature of their climate.

For the rest, they live in a very pleasant country, and temperate climate, so that, as my authors tell me, it is rare to see a man sick there, and they assured me they never saw any of the natives either paralytic, blear-eyed, toothless, or decrepid with age. The situation of their country is all along by the sea-shore, being shut up on the land-side by great high

\* Vir. Georg. lib. ii. ver. 20,

mountains, from which it is a hundred leagues, or thereabouts, to the sea. Here are fish and flesh in abundance, that have no resemblance with what comes to our tables; and they use no cookery but plain boiling, broiling, roasting, or baking on the coals. The first man that ever came to them on horse-back, though he had made an acquaintance with them by several voyages, so frightened them by his appearance of half man and half horse, that they killed him with their arrows before they could find their mistake.

Their buildings, which are very long, and capable of entertaining 200 or 300 people, are made of the bark of tall trees, fixed with one end to the ground, and leaning to, and supporting, one another at the top, like some of our barns, the roof of which descends almost to the ground, and serves instead of the side walls. They have wood so hard, that they cleave it and make swords of it, and grills to broil their meat on. Their buildings.

Their beds, which are of cotton, are hung up to the roof, like our seamen's hammocks, and hold but one person, for the wives lie apart from their husbands. Their beds.

They rise with the sun, and immediately fall to eating, when they make one meal, which serves them for the whole day. They do not then drink (as Suidas reports of some people of the East, who never drank at their meals), but they drink several times in a day, and to a hearty pitch. Their liquor is made of a certain root, and is of the colour of claret; and they always drink it lukewarm. It will not keep above two or three days, has a brisk savour, is not at all heady, is very good for the stomach, but proves laxative to those who are not used to it, though to those who are it is a very pleasant beverage. Instead of bread, they make use of a certain white compound, like coriander comfits, which I have tasted, and found to be sweet, but a little flat. Their meals, their drink, and their bread.

They spend the whole day in dancing. The young Their pastimes.

men go out to hunt the wild beasts with bows and arrows. Part of their women, in the mean time, are employed in warming their drink, which is their chief employment. One of their old men in the morning, before they fall to eating, preaches to the whole household, in common, walking from one end of the house to the other, several times repeating the same sentences, till he has gone all round the family (for their buildings are at least a hundred yards long), to whom he only recommends two things, valour against their enemies, and love to their wives. And they never fail to put them in mind how much they are the more obliged to it, because it is the women who provide them their drink warm, and well relished. In several places, and at my house amongst others, may be seen the form of their beds, swords, and wooden gauntlets, with which they guard their wrists in battle, and their canes, hollow at one end, by the sound of which they keep time in their dancing. They shave all their hairy parts, and much more nicely than we, without any razor but what is of wood or stone.

They believe the immortality of the soul.

They believe the eternity of the soul's duration, and that those who have deserved well of the gods, are lodged in that part of the firmament where the sun rises, and the damned in the west.

Their priests and prophets, their morality, and how they are treated, if their prophecies prove false.

They have I know not what kind of priests and prophets, who live in the mountains, and are seldom seen by the people. Whenever they come down to them there is a great festival and a solemn assembly of the people from many villages (or barns, as I have described them, which are about a French league from one another). The prophet then speaks to them in public, exhorting them to virtue and the performance of their duty; but their whole system of morality consists in these two articles, resolution in war, and affection to their wives. He also foretells to them things to come, and what they must expect will be the event of their enterprises, and he either persuades them to, or dissuades them from,

war ; but woe be to him if he does not guess right, for if it happens to them otherwise than he foretold, they condemn him for a false prophet : and if they can catch him, cut him in a thousand pieces. For this reason, if any one finds himself mistaken, he keeps out of sight. Divination is a gift of God, therefore to abuse it is an imposture that ought to be punished.

Among the Scythians, when their diviners failed in their predictions, they were bound hand and foot, and laid on a cart loaden with furze, and drawn by oxen, on which they were burnt to death ;\* they who only meddle with things within the sphere of human capacity, are excusable in doing the best they can ; but as for those other people that come and delude us with assurances of an extraordinary faculty beyond our understanding, ought they not to be punished for not making good their promise, and for the temerity of their imposture ?

They have wars with the nations that are beyond their mountains, farther within the main land, to which they go stark naked, without any weapons but bows or wooden swords, pointed at the end like the heads of our javelins. Their obstinacy in battle is wonderful, as they never end without great effusion of blood, for they know not what it is to be frightened and to run away. Every one brings home for a trophy the head of some enemy that he has killed, which he sets up over the door of his house.

After having treated their prisoners a good while in the handsomest manner they can think of, the person who has the property of them invites a great number of his acquaintance, and, when they are come, ties a cord to one of the prisoner's arms, by one end of which he holds him some paces distance, that he may not hurt him, and gives to the friend he loves best, the other arm to hold in the same man-

False prophets burnt by the Scythians.

The wars of the savages, their weapons and manner of fighting.

They eat their prisoners, and why.

\* Herodot. lib. iv. p. 279.



ner, and then they two, in the presence of the whole assembly, run him through the body with their swords. This done, they roast him and eat him in common, and send some slices of him to their absent friends. They do not do this, as it is imagined, for the sake of nourishment, as the Scythians did of old, but to denote the last degree of revenge ; as will appear by this, that perceiving, that when the Portuguese had taken any prisoners, they inflicted another sort of death upon them, which was to set them in the earth up to the waist, to let fly their arrows at the upper part, and then to hang them ; they were of opinion that these people of the other world (as they had made their neighbours acquainted with a great many vices, and far outstripped them in all sorts of mischief) had a reason for taking this sort of revenge, and that it must be more severe than theirs, and so began to leave their old way, and to follow this. I am not sorry that we should here take notice of the barbarous cruelty of such an action ; but rather that, while we judge so nicely of their faults, we are so blind to our own. I think there is more barbarity in eating a man alive than when he is dead ; in tearing a body limb from limb, by racks and torments, while it has the sense of feeling, in roasting it by degrees, in causing it to be bit and worried by dogs and swine (as we have not only read, but lately seen, not between veteran enemies, but between neighbours and fellow-citizens, and what is worse, under pretence of piety and religion), than in the roasting and eating it after it is dead. Chrysippus\* and Zeno, the two heads of the stoical sect, were of opinion that there was no hurt in making use of our dead bodies to any purpose whatsoever, to serve our occasions, and even for our nourishment, as our ancestors, when besieged by Cæsar in the city Alexia, resolved to keep themselves

\* Diog. Laert. in the Life of Chrysippus, lib. vii. sect. 188.

from being starved to death by the bodies of their old men, women and other persons, incapable of bearing arms :

*Vascones, fama est, alimentis talibus usi  
Produxere animas.\**

'Tis said the Gascons with such meats as these,  
In time of siege their hunger did appease.

And the physicians scruple not to make use of human flesh every way, either inwardly or outwardly, for our health. But the savages here treated of, never maintained any opinion so enormous as to excuse treason, disloyalty, tyranny, and cruelty, which are our familiar vices: we may therefore style them barbarous with an eye to the laws of reason, but not in respect to ourselves, who exceed them in all kinds of barbarity.

Their warfare is quite noble and generous, and is as excusable and commendable as that human malady is capable of being, it having no foundation with them but the sole jealousy of virtue. They do not contend for the conquest of new lands, for those they possess still enjoy that natural fertility which furnishes them, without labour and toil, with such an abundance of all necessaries, that they have no need to enlarge their borders.

They are also happy in this circumstance, that they desire no more than what the necessities of nature demand, every thing beyond that being to them superfluous.

Men of the same age generally call one another brothers; those who are younger, children; and the old men are fathers to all. These leave to their heirs, in common, the full possession of their goods and chattels, without any division, or any other title than what nature bestows upon her creatures at bringing them into the world.

\* Juv. sat. xv. ver. 93, 94.

All that  
they get by  
any victory  
over their  
neigh-  
bours.

If their neighbours come over the mountains to attack them, and obtain a victory over them, all that the conquerors gain by it is glory, and the advantage of proving their superiority in valour; for they take no spoils from the vanquished, but return home to their own country, where they have no want of any necessaries, nor of that happy knowledge how to live contentedly in their condition. And these in their turn do the same. They demand no other ransom of the prisoners they take, than the confession and acknowledgment of being vanquished. But there is not a man of them to be found in a whole century, who had not rather perish, than abate an ace of the grandeur of his invincible courage, either by a look or word. There is not one who had not rather be killed and eaten, than so much as open his mouth to desire he may not be so treated. They indulge them with full liberty, that their lives may be so much the dearer to them; yet commonly accost them with menaces of their approaching death, of the torments which they are to suffer, or the preparations making for that purpose, of the mutilation of their members, and of the feast that is to be made on their carcasses. And all this they do for no other purpose, but to extort some gentle or submissive word from them, or to put it into their heads to make their escape, for the sake of gaining the advantage of having terrified them, and shaken their constancy: and, indeed, if the thing be rightly considered, it is in this point only that true victory consists:

— *Victoria nulla est,  
Quam quæ confessos animo quoque subjugat hostes.\**  
No victory's so true and so complete,  
As when the vanquish'd own their just defeat.

That warlike nation, the Hungarians, did not pur-

\* Claudian de Sexto Consulatū Honorii Panegyris, ver. 248, 249.

sue their point formerly beyond reducing the enemy to beg quarters : for after they had forced them to this submission, they let them go without injury, or ransom, or any greater demand upon them, than their promise not to bear arms against them for the future. We have several advantages over our enemies that are borrowed, and not our own. To have stronger arms and legs than another man, is a qualification for a porter, but not for a man of true valour. The disposition of soldiers in battle array, is a lifeless corporeal quality ; if our enemy stumble, or his eyes are dazzled with the light of the sun, it is owing to fortune ; and to be a good fencer is a qualification of art and science, that may be attained by a coward and a poltroon.

The estimation and value of a man consists in the heart, and the will, and therein lies his true honour ; valour is the stability, not of legs and arms, but of courage and the mind. It does not consist in the goodness of our horse, or our armour, but in ourselves. The man who falls obstinately courageous, *Si succiderit de genu pugnabit ; \* if his legs fail him, will fight upon his knees.* He who does not flinch, be he in ever such imminent danger of death, and who, when giving up the ghost, looks his enemy in the face with a stern and disdainful countenance, is conquered not by us but by fortune ; nay, he is killed, not conquered ; the most valiant being sometimes the most unfortunate.

There are actually some defeats which may compare even with victories for triumph. As for those four sister victories, the most signal which the sun ever beheld, viz. those of Salamis, Platea, Mycale, and Sicily, they durst not set all their glory united in opposition to that of the defeat of king Leonidas, and his army, at the pass of Thermopylæ. Who ever ran with a more glorious emulation or ambition to the winning, than the captain Ischolas did to the

What constitutes the true merit of a man, and his superiority over his fellow-creatures.

Defeats that are more meritorious than the greatest victories.

\* Senec. de Providentiæ.

losing, of a battle? Who ever found out a more ingenious and curious stratagem for his self-preservation, than he did for his own destruction? He was commissioned to defend a certain pass of the Peloponnesus against the Arcadians; but finding it impossible for him to do it, upon observation of the nature of the place, and the inequality of his forces to that of the enemy, and being sure that no man, who faced the enemy there, must ever expect to return; and on the other hand thinking it would be a reproach to his valour and magnanimity, and to the Lacedæmonian name, to fail in his commission, he chose a medium between the two extremes, after this manner.\* The youngest and most active of his soldiers, he reserved for the defence and service of their country, and sent them home; and with the rest, whose loss would not be of so much consequence, he resolved to maintain this pass, and by the death of them, to make the enemy pay as dear a purchase as possible for their entry, as it accordingly fell out: for being instantly surrounded on all sides by the Arcadians, after having made a great slaughter of them, he and his men were all put to the sword. Is any trophy erected to the victors, which is not rather due to the vanquished? The true way to victory is by fighting, not by coming off; and the honour of valour consists in the battle, not in the defeat.

The constancy of those savages that are taken prisoners.

To return to my story; these prisoners are so far from being humbled by any thing done to them, that, on the contrary, during the two or three months that they are kept under guard, they appear with a brisk countenance, urge their keepers to make haste to bring them to the test; defy, rail at them, reproach them with cowardice, and with the number of battles they have lost.

\* See Diodorus of Sicily, lib. xv. cap. 7, where the action of Ischolas is compared to that of king Leonidas, which Montaigne extols above the most celebrated victories.

I have a song made by one of these prisoners, wherein he says, "They shall be welcome to meet, one and all, to dine upon him, and thereby eat their fathers and grandfathers, whose flesh had served to feed and nourish him. These muscles," says he, "this flesh, and these veins, they are your own. Poor souls, as you are, you little think that the substance of the limbs of your ancestors is here still. Do but mind the taste, and you will perceive the relish of your own flesh." This is a composition that has nothing of the taste of barbarism. They who paint him dying after being thus stabbed, paint the prisoner spitting in the faces of his executioners, and making mouths at them; and in truth, they never cease to brave and defy them, both by looks and language, to the very last gasp. It is certain that these men compared to us are very savage, for in good faith either they must needs be such, or else we must, there being a wonderful difference between their manners and ours.

The men here enjoy a plurality of wives, and the more eminent they are for their valour, the greater number they have.

There is one very extraordinary thing to be observed in their married state, viz. that as the jealousy of our wives excites them to hinder us from the friendship and favour of other women, their wives have the same emulation to procure that happiness for their husbands: for being more careful to promote the honour of their husbands than of any one thing besides, they seek out very eagerly for the most companions they can find for the husband, it being a testimony of his valour. Our wives will say this is monstrous! but it is not so. It is a virtue truly matrimonial, though of the highest form. We find in the Bible, that Sarah, the wife of Abraham, and Jacob's wives Leah and Rachel, furnished their husbands with their beautiful maids: Livia favoured the appetites of Augustus to her own

prejudice ; and Stratonice,\* the wife of king Deiotarus, not only accommodated her husband with the enjoyment of a handsome young chambermaid in her service, but carefully brought up the children he had by her, and helped them to succeed to their father's dominions. And lest it should be thought that all this is done merely from a servile obligation to their customs, and by the impression of the authority of their ancient practice, without reason or judgment, and for want of sense to take another course, it is necessary in this place to give some touches of their capacity.

Love songs  
of an American  
savage.

Besides what I just now repeated from one of their military songs, I have another, a love-song of theirs, which begins in this manner, viz. " Stay, adder, stay, that by thy likeness my sister may draw the fashion and work of a rich ribbon for me to make a present of to my sweet-heart, by which means thy beauty and thy disposition may at all times give thee the preference before all other ser-pents." Wherein the first couplet, Stay, adder, &c. makes the burden of the song. Now I am conversant enough with poetry to judge thus much, that not only there is nothing barbarous in this thought, but that it is perfectly Anacreontic.

The lan-  
guage of  
the savages.

Their language moreover is soft, and of a pleasing accent, resembling the terminations of the Greek.

What some  
of the sa-  
vages who  
came to  
France,  
thought of  
our man-  
ners.

Three of these people foreseeing how dear the knowledge of the corruption of this part of the world would one day cost their happiness and repose, and that this correspondence would in the end prove their ruin, as I suppose it to be already in a fair way of doing so (wretched men ! to suffer themselves to

\* See Plutarch in his Treatise of the Virtuous Deeds of Women, in the Article *Στρατονίς*. The last English translation by Mr. Cotton, is guilty of a small blunder here, by making the name Stratonice, for that of a country. Galatia, says Plutarch, also produced Stratonice the wife of Deiotarus, &c. Tome xxxi. p. 258, the Paris edition in 1624.

be deluded with the desire of novelty, and to leave their own serene sky, to come and gaze at ours), were at Roan when the late king Charles IX. was there. The monarch himself talked to them a good while, and they were made to see our fashions, our pomp, and the form of a fine city; after which somebody asked their opinion, and wanted to know of them what things they most admired of all they had seen? To which they made answer, three things, of which I am sorry I have forgot the third, but two I yet remember. They said, in the first place, they thought it very strange that so many tall men, wearing great beards, strong and well armed, about the king's person (by whom, it is like, they meant his Swiss guards), should submit to obey a child, and that they did not rather choose out one among themselves to command. Secondly, that they had taken notice of men amongst us who were fat, and crammed with all manner of good things, whilst their halves\* were begging at the gates, lean and half-starved with hunger and poverty; and they wondered how these necessitous halves could put up with such unjust treatment, and not take the others by the throat, or set fire to their houses.

I talked with one of them a good while, but I had so sorry an interpreter, who was so perplexed by his stupidity to apprehend my meaning, that I could get nothing of any moment out of him. Asking of what advantage his superiority over the people was to him (for he was a captain, and our mariners styled him king), he told me "to march at the head of them to war:" and demanding further of him how many men he had to follow him? he showed me a space of ground, to signify as many as could stand in such a compass, which might be four or five thousand men: then putting the question to him, whether or no his authority expired with the

*Answer of  
one of the  
savages to  
Montaigne.*

\* It is an idiom in their language to call men the half of one another.



war? he told me, "this part of it remained; that  
 "when he went to visit the villages of his depend-  
 "ence, they made paths for him through their thick-  
 "est woods, so that he could pass from one place  
 "to another with ease." Upon the whole, this was  
 not a bad thing. If you ask why? I answer, be-  
 cause they wear no breeches.

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## CHAPTER XXXI.

*That a Man must not be too hasty in judging of  
 Divine Ordinances.*

The sub-  
 jects of im-  
 postures.

**T**HINGS unknown are the true field and subject  
 of imposture, forasmuch as in the first place their  
 very strangeness gives them credit, and moreover,  
 by not being subjected to our ordinary discourse,  
 they deprive us of the means to dispute them. For  
 which reason, says Plato, it is much more easy to  
 satisfy the hearers, when speaking of the nature of  
 the gods, than of the nature of men, because the ig-  
 norance of the auditory affords a fair and large career,  
 and all manner of liberty, in the handling of abstruse  
 things; thence it comes to pass, that nothing is so  
 firmly believed as what we least know: nor any  
 people so confident as those who entertain us with  
 fables, such as alchymists, judicial astrologers, for-  
 tune-tellers, physicians, and *Id genus omne*; to  
 whom I could willingly, if I durst, join a class of  
 people, who take upon them to interpret and cri-  
 ticise the designs of God himself, pretending to find  
 out the cause of every accident, and to pry into the  
 secrets of the divine will, and the incomprehensible  
 motives of his works.\* And although the variety,

\* People who pretend to give the most precise determination of  
 the designs of God, the duration, efficacy, and extent of his fa-  
 vours, &c.

and the continual discordance, of events, throw them from corner to corner, and from east to west, yet do they still persist in their vain inquisition, and with the same pencil paint black and white. In a nation of the Indies, there is this commendable custom, that when any thing befalls them amiss in any rencounter or battle, they publicly ask pardon of the sun, who is their God, as if they had committed an unjust action, always imputing their good or evil fortune to the divine justice, and to that submitting their own judgment and reason.

It is enough for a Christian to believe that all things come from God, to receive them with acknowledgment of his divine and unsearchable wisdom, and also to accept them in good part, with what face soever they may present themselves; but I do not approve of what I see in use, that is, to seek to establish and support our religion by the prosperity of our enterprises. Our belief has other foundations enough, without authorising it by events; for people accustomed to such plausible arguments as these, and so peculiar to their own taste, it is to be feared, lest when they fail of success, they should also stagger in their faith: as in the war wherein we are now engaged upon account of religion, those who had the better in the affair of Rochelabeille,\* rejoicing at that success, and boasting it as an infallible approbation of their cause, when they came afterwards to excuse their misfortunes at Jarnac and Moncontour,† it was by saying they were fatherly scourges and corrections; if they have not a people wholly at their mercy, they make it obvious enough to them, that is to take two sorts of grist out of the same sack, and with the same mouth to blow hot and cold. It

No authority can be ascribed to the Christian religion from events.

\* A great skirmish that had like to have caused a general battle between the troops of the admiral de Coligny and those of the duke of Anjou, in May, 1569.

† These battles were won by the duke of Anjou, the first in March, and the last in October, 1569.

were better to support a cause with the real foundations of truth.

A naval  
victory  
gained over  
the Turks.

It was a brave naval battle that was gained, a few months since, against the Turks,\* under the command of Don John of Austria; but it has also pleased God at other times, to let us see as great victories at our own expense. In fine, it is a hard matter to reduce divine things to our balance, without losing a great deal of the weight. And he that would take upon him to give a reason, why Arius, and his Pope Leo, the principal heads of the Arian heresy, should die at different times, in a way so much alike and so strange (for being withdrawn from the disputation, by the griping in the guts, they both of them suddenly gave up the ghost upon the stool), and would aggravate this divine vengeance by the circumstance of the place; might as well add the death of Helio-gabalus, who was also slain in a house of office.† But what? Irenæus was involved in the same fortune.

The good  
or bad suc-  
cess of men  
no proof ei-  
ther of their  
merit or de-  
merit.

God being pleased to show us, that the good have something else to hope for, and the wicked something else to fear, than the fortunes or misfortunes of the world, he manages and applies them, according to his own secret will, and deprives us of the means, foolishly to make our own profit. And those people deceive themselves, who pretend to do it by human reason. They never give one hit that they do not receive two for it; of which St. Augustin gives a very great proof on his adversaries. It is a conflict that is more decided by strength of memory than the force of reason. We are to content ourselves with the light it pleases the sun to communicate to us, by virtue of his rays, and he that will lift up his eyes to take in a greater, let him not think it strange if, for the punishment of his presumption, he thereby lose his sight, *Quis hominum potest scire*

\* In 1571.

† In *Latrind ad quam confugerat, occisus*. Ælii Lampridii Heliogabalus, p. 107.

*consilium Dei? Aut quis poterit cogitare, quid velit Dominus?* “Who amongst men can know the counsel of God? Or who can think what the will of the Lord is?”

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## CHAPTER XXXII.

*To avoid Pleasures, even at the Expense of Life.*

I HAD long ago observed most of the opinions of the ancients to concur in this, that it is high time to die when there is more ill than good in living; and that to preserve life to our own torment and inconvenience, is repugnant to the very laws of nature, as these old rules instruct us:

Ἡ ζῆν ἀλύπως, ἡ θανεῖν εὐδαιμόνως,  
 Καλὸν θνήσκειν οἷς ὕβριν τὸ ζῆν φέρει,  
 Κρεῖσσον τὸ μὴ ζῆν ἐς ἡν, ἢ ζῆν ἀθλίως.

Adieu! want, care, with mis'ry's various train,  
 Death then is happy, when to live is pain.

But to push this contempt of death so far as to employ it to the drawing off our thoughts from the honours, riches, dignities, and other favours and goods, as we call them, of fortune, as if reason were not sufficient to persuade us to avoid them, without this additional injunction, I had never seen it either commanded or practised, till this passage of Seneca fell into my hands; who advising Lucilius, a man of great power and authority about the emperor, to alter his voluptuous and magnificent way of living, and to withdraw himself from this worldly ambition, to some solitary, quiet, and philosophical life, and the other alleging some difficulties; “I am of opinion (says Cicero, ep. 22), either that thou leave that life, or life itself. I would, indeed, advise thee to the more gentle way, and to untie, rather

“ than to break, the knot thou hast indiscreetly knit,  
 “ provided, that if it be not otherwise to be untied,  
 “ thou break it. There is no man so great a coward,  
 “ that had not rather fall at once, than to be always  
 “ falling.” I should have thought this counsel suitable enough to the stoical roughness; but it appears the more strange, for being borrowed from Epicurus, who writes the same, upon the like occasion, to Idomeneus. Yet I think I have observed something like it, but with the Christian moderation, amongst our own people. St. Hilary, bishop of Poitiers, that famous enemy of the Arian heresy, being in Syria, had intelligence that Abra, his only daughter, whom he left at home with her mother, was sought in marriage by the gayest noblemen of the country, as being a virgin virtuously brought up, beautiful, rich, and in the flower of her age: whereupon he writ to her (as it appears upon record), that she should remove her affection from all those pleasures and advantages that were proposed to her; for he had in his travels found out a much greater and more worthy match for her, a husband of much greater power and magnificence, that would present her with robes, and jewels of inestimable value; his design in this was, to dispossess her of the appetite and use of worldly delights, and to join her wholly to God; but the nearest and most certain way to this, being, as he conceived, the death of his daughter; he never ceased, by vows, prayers, and oraisons, to beg of God to call her out of this world, and take her to himself, as accordingly it came to pass; for soon after his return she died, at which he expressed a singular joy. This seems to outdo the other, forasmuch as he applies himself at first sight, to this method which they only take secondarily; and, besides, it was towards his only daughter. But I will not omit the latter end of this story, though it be not to my purpose: St. Hilary’s wife having understood from him how the death of their daughter was brought about by his desire and design, and how

much happier she was, to be removed out of this world, than to have stayed in it, conceived so lively an apprehension of the eternal and heavenly beatitude, that she begged of her husband, with the extremest importunity, to do as much for her; and God, at their joint request, calling her to him shortly after, it was a death embraced on both sides with singular content.

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## CHAPTER XXXIII.

*Fortune is often met with in the Train of Reason.*

SUCH is the inconstancy of the various biasses of fortune, that she cannot avoid appearing to us with all sorts of faces. Can there be a more express act of justice than this? The duke of Valentinois\* having resolved, in 1503, to poison Adrian, cardinal of Cornetto, with whom pope Alexander the Sixth, his father, and himself, were to sup at his house in the Vatican, he sent before a bottle of poisoned wine, and withal strict order to the butler to keep it very safe. The pope being come before his son, and calling for a whet, the butler, supposing this wine was so strictly recommended to his care only upon account of its excellence, served a glass of it to the pope, and the duke himself coming in presently after, and believing his bottle had not been touched, took also his glass; so that the father died immediately upon the place, and the son, after having been long tormented with sickness, was reserved to another and a worse fortune.

\* History of Francis Guiccardin, lib. vi. p. 267, printed at Venice, by Gabriel Giolito, in 1568.

Fortune  
seems some-  
times to  
sport with  
us.

Sometimes she seems to play upon us, just in the nick of time. Monsieur d'Estree, at that time guidon to Monsieur de Vendosme ; and Monsieur de Liques, lieutenant to the company of the duke of Arscot, being both suitors to the Sieur de Founge-selles's sister, though of different parties (as it oft falls out among frontier neighbours), the Sieur de Liques carried her ; but on the very day he was married, and which was worse, before he went to bed to his wife, the bridegroom, having a mind to break a lance in honour of his new bride, went out to skirmish, near to St. Omers, where the Sieur d'Estree proving the stronger, took him prisoner, and to render his victory the more brilliant, the lady herself was fain

*(Conjugis ante coacta novi dimittere collum)  
Quam veniens una, atque altera rursus hyems,  
Noctibus in longis avidum saturasset amorem.\**

Off her fair arms, the am'rous ring to break,  
Which clung so fast to her new spouse's neck,  
Ere of two winters many a friendly night  
Had sated their love's greedy appetite.

to request the favour of him, to deliver up his prisoner to her, as he accordingly did, the gentlemen of France never denying any thing to the ladies. Does not fortune seem to be an artist here ? Constantine, the son of Hellen, founded the empire of Constantinople, and some ages after, Constantine, the son of Hellen, put an end to it. Sometimes she is pleased to emulate our miracles. We are told, that king Clovis besieging Angoulesme, the walls, by the divine favour, fell down of themselves. And Bouchet has it from some author, that king Robert having sat down before a city, and afterwards stolen away from the siege to keep the feast of St. Aignan, at Orleans ; as he was in devotion, at a certain part of the mass, the walls of the beleagured city,

\* Catullus ad Manl. ver. 81, &c.

without any effort made against them, on a sudden tumbled down. But she did quite contrary in our Milan war; for captain Rense laying siege to the city Verona, and having carried a mine under a great part of the wall, it was lifted from its base, by the springing of the mine, but dropt down again, nevertheless, whole and entire, and so exactly upon its foundation, that the besieged suffered no inconvenience by it.

Sometimes she plays the physician. Jason Phereus, <sup>Fortune sometimes turns doctor.</sup> being given over by the physicians, by reason of an imposthume in his breast, and having a mind to rid himself of it by death, rushed desperately into the thickest ranks of the enemy, where he was fortunately wounded quite through the body, so that the imposthume broke, and he was cured.\*

Did she not also excel the painter Protogenes in <sup>Sometimes she is superior to art.</sup> the knowledge of his art? This man finished the picture of a dog quite tired, and out of breath, in all the other parts excellently well to his own liking, but not being able to express, as he would, the slaver and foam of his mouth, he was so vexed with his work, that he took a sponge, which, by cleaning his pencils, had imbibed a variety of colours, and threw it in a rage against the picture, with an intent utterly to deface it; when fortune guiding the sponge to hit just upon the mouth of the dog, it there performed what art could not attain to.†

Does she not sometimes direct our counsels, and <sup>And sometimes she corrects our counsels.</sup> correct them? Isabel, queen of England, being to return from Zealand to her own kingdom in 1326, with an army in favour of her son, against her husband, had been lost had she come into the port she

\* Plin. Nat. Hist. lib. vii. cap. 50. Valerius Maximus who mentions this accident, lib. i. cap. 9, in Externis, represents the fact in a manner still more miraculous, for he says, that Jason received this important service from an assassin. Seneca ascribes this accident to the same cause. De Benef. lib. ii. cap. 19.

† Plin. Nat. Hist. lib. xxxv. cap. 10.



intended, being there laid wait for by the enemy; but fortune, against her will, threw her into another haven, where she landed in safety. And he of old, who, throwing a stone at a dog, hit and killed his mother-in-law; had he not reason to pronounce this verse:

Ταυτόματον ἡμῶν καλλίῳ βυλιύεταϊ.\*

———— By this you see,  
Fortune takes surer aim than we.

She sur-  
passes the  
rules of hu-  
man pro-  
vidence.

Iscegest had tampered with two soldiers to kill Timoleon, at Adrano in Sicily. They took their time to do it, when he was performing a sacrifice; when thrusting into the crowd, as they were making signs to one another, that now was a fit time for their business, in steps a third, who, with a sword struck one of them violently over the pate, and laying him dead upon the place, runs away. His companion concluding himself discovered and undone, ran to the altar, and begged for protection, promising to discover the whole truth. And while he was laying open the whole conspiracy, behold a third man, who, being apprehended, was, as a murderer, pulled and haled by the people through the crowd, towards Timoleon, and other the most eminent persons of the assembly, to whom he cried for pardon, pleading that he had justly slain his father's murderer; and proving upon the spot, by sufficient witnesses, which his good fortune very opportunely supplied him withal, that his father was really killed in the city of the Leontines by that very man on whom he had taken his revenge, he was rewarded ten Attic minæ,† for having had the good fortune, while he was taking satisfaction for the death of his father, to preserve the life of the com-

\* Menander.

† He was a Sicilian, born at Syracuse, that aimed to oppress the liberty of his country, of which Timoleon was the protector. Plutarch in the Life of Timoleon, chap. 7.

‡ The old Attic mina was seventy-five drachms.

mon father of the Sicilians. Thus fortune, in her conduct, surpasses all the rules of common prudence.

To conclude, is there not a direct application of her favour, bounty, and piety, manifestly discovered in this action? Ignatius,\* the father, and Ignatius, the son, being proscribed by the Triumviri of Rome, resolved upon this generous act of mutual kindness, to fall by the hands of one another, and by that means to frustrate the cruelty of the tyrants. Accordingly, with their swords drawn, they rushed one upon another, where fortune so guided the points, that they gave two wounds equally mortal, affording withal so much honour to so brave a friendship, as to leave them just strength enough to draw out of their wounds their bloody weapons, that they might have liberty to clasp one another in this condition with so close an embrace, that the executioners cut off both their heads at once, leaving the bodies fast linked together in this noble knot, and their wounds close to each other, affectionately sucking in the blood and the remainder of one another's lives.

The father and son proscribed to die together, by a special favour of fortune.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

### *Of one Defect in our Government.*

MY deceased father, who, for a man that had no other advantages than experience only, and his own natural parts, was nevertheless of a very clear judgment, has formerly told me that he once had thoughts of endeavouring to introduce this practice; that there might be in every city a certain place assigned, to which such as stood in need of any thing might repair, and have their business entered by an

The utility of a project of an office of inquiry.

\* Appian Alexand. de Bellis Civilibus, lib. iv. p. 969.

officer appointed for that purpose ; as for example, I want to sell, or to buy, pearls : such a one wants company to go to Paris : such a one inquires for a servant of such a quality : such a one for a master : such a one inquires for an artificer : some for one thing, some for another, every one according to what he wants. And, I fancy, these mutual advertisements would be of no contemptible advantage to the public correspondence and intelligence : for there are always people that hunt after one another, and, for want of knowing one another's occasions, men are left in very great necessity.

The miserable deaths of Giraldus and Castalio.

I hear, to the great shame of the age we live in, that in our very sight two most excellent men, for learning, died so poor, that they had scarce bread to put in their mouths, Lilius Gregorius Giraldus in Italy, and Sebastianus Castalio in Germany : and I do believe, there are a thousand men would have invited them into their families, with very advantageous conditions, or have relieved them where they were, had they known their wants. The world is not so generally corrupted, but that I know a man that would heartily wish the estate his ancestors have left him, might be employed, so long as it shall please fortune to let him possess it, to shelter remarkable persons of any kind, whom misfortune sometimes persecutes to the last degree, from the danger of necessity ; and at least place them in such a condition, that they must be very hard to please if they were not contented.

The very laudable regulations observed by Montaigne's father.

My father, in his economical government, had this order (which I know how to commend, but by no means to imitate), which was, that besides the register he kept of the household affairs, where the small accounts, payments, and contracts, which do not require a secretary's hand, were entered, and which his bailiff always had in custody ; he ordered him, whom he kept to write for him, to keep a paper journal, and in it to set down all the remarkable occurrences, and daily memoirs of his family affairs ;

very pleasant to look over when time begins to wear things out of memory, and very useful sometimes to put us out of doubt, when such a thing was begun, when ended, what visitors came, with what attendants, and how long they staid; our voyages, absences, marriages, deaths, reception of good or ill news; the change of principal servants, and the like. An ancient custom, which I think it would not be amiss for every one to revive in his own family; and I find I did very foolishly in neglecting the same.

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## CHAPTER XXXV.

*Of the Custom of wearing Clothes.*

WHATEVER I shall say upon this subject, I am of necessity to force a barrier of custom, so careful has she been to shut up all the avenues. I was disputing with myself, in this cold season, whether the custom of going naked, in those nations lately discovered, is owing to the hot temperature of their air, as we say of the Moors and Indians, or whether it was the original custom of mankind: men of understanding, forasmuch as all things under the sun, as the holy writ declares, are subject to the same laws, were wont, in such considerations as these, where we are to distinguish the natural laws from those of human invention, to have recourse to the general polity of the world, where there could be nothing counterfeited. Now all other creatures being sufficiently furnished with necessities for their existence, it is not to be imagined, that we only should be brought into the world, in a defective and indigent condition, and in a state that cannot subsist without foreign assistance; and therefore I believe, that as plants, trees, animals, and all things that have

What gave rise to the custom of some nations to go stark naked.

life, are by nature sufficiently covered, to defend them from the injuries of weather,

*Propterea que ferè res omnes, aut corio sunt,  
Aut setâ, aut conchis, aut callo, aut cortice tectæ.\**

And therefore shells, or rinds, or films inclose,  
Or skin, or hair, on ev'ry body grows.

so were we: but as those who by artificial light put out that of the day, so we by borrowed forms have destroyed our own. And it is plain, that it is custom which renders that impossible to us, which otherwise is not so; for of those nations who have no notion of clothing, some are situated under the same temperate climate that we are, and some in much severer climates. And, besides, our most tender parts are always exposed to the air, as the eyes, mouth, nose, and ears; and our peasants, like our ancestors in former times, go open-breasted to the waist. Had we been born with a necessity of wearing petticoats and breeches, there is no doubt but nature would have fortified those parts she intended should be exposed to the fury of the seasons, with a thicker skin, as she has done the fingers' ends, and the soles of the feet. And why should this seem hard to believe? I observe much greater difference between my habit and that of one of our country boors, than between his and a man that has no other covering but his skin. How many men, especially in Turkey, go naked upon the account of devotion? I know not who it was that asked a beggar, whom he saw in his shirt in the depth of winter, as brisk as another muffled up to the ears in furs, how he could endure to go so. "Why, Sir," said he, "you go with your face bare, but I am all face." The Italians, I think, have a story of the duke of Florence's fool, whom his master asking, "How, being so thin clad, he was able to support the cold, which he

\* Lucret. lib. iv. ver. 933, 934.

“ himself was so guarded against?” “ Why,” replied the fool, “ use my receipt, to put on all the “ clothes you have at once as I do, and you will feel “ no more cold than I.”\* King Massinissa, to an extreme old age, could never be prevailed upon to go with his head covered, how cold, stormy, or rainy soever the weather might be ; which also is reported of the emperor Severus. Herodotus tells us,† that in the battles fought between the Egyptians and the Persians, it was observed, both by himself and others, that of those who were left dead upon the place, the heads of the Egyptians were found to be without comparison harder than those of the Persians, by reason that the last had gone with their heads always covered from their infancy, first, with biggins, and then with turbans, and the others were always shaved and bare. And king Agesilaus, to a decrepid age, took care to wear always the same clothes in winter that he did in summer. Cæsar, says Suetonius,‡ marched always at the head of his army for the most part on foot, with his head bare, whether it was rain or sun-shine ; and as much is said of Hannibal :

— *Tum vertice nudo,*  
*Excipere insanos imbres, cœlique ruinam.*§  
 Exposing his bare head to furious show'rs,  
 While hail or rain in torrents on it pours.

A Venetian, who has long lived in Pegu, and is lately returned from thence, writes, that the men and women of that kingdom, though they cover all their other parts, go always bare-foot, and ride so too. And Plato very earnestly advises, for the health of the whole body, to give the head and the feet no other covering than what nature has bestowed. He whom the Poles have elected for their king (since ours came thence), who is, indeed, one of the great-

\* Cicero of Old Age, cap. x.

† Lib. iii. p. 186, 187.

‡ Sueton. Jul. Cæsar, sect. 58.

§ Silius It. lib. i. ver. 250, 251.

est princes of this age, never wears any gloves, and be it in winter, or whatever weather, never wears any other cap abroad than what he wears at home. Whereas I cannot endure to go unbuttoned, or untied; my neighbouring labourers would think themselves in fetters if they were so braced. Varro is of opinion, that when it was ordained we should have our heads uncovered in the presence of the gods, or the magistrate,\* it was rather so ordered upon the score of health, and to inure us to the injuries of weather, than upon the account of reverence. And since we are now treating of cold, and of Frenchmen being used to wear variety of colours (not I myself, for I seldom wear other than black, or white, in imitation of my father), let us add another story of captain Martin du Bellay, who affirms that, in his Luxembourg journey, he saw so sharp frosts, that the ammunition wine was cut with hatchets and wedges, delivered out to the soldiers by weight,† and that they carried it away in baskets; and Ovid says,

*Nudaque consistunt formam servantia testæ  
Vina, nec hausta meri, sed data frusta bibunt.‡*

— The wine,

Dug from its cask, retains the figure still,  
Nor do they draughts, but crusts of Bacchus swill.

At the mouth of the lake Mœotis, the frosts are so very sharp, that on the same spot where the lieutenant of Mithridates had fought the enemy dry-foot, and given them a defeat, the summer following he also obtained over them a naval victory.

The Romans fought at a great disadvantage, in the engagement they had with the Carthaginians near

\* Plin. Nat. Hist. lib. xxviii, cap. 6.

† Philip de Comines, speaking of such cold weather in his time (1469) in the principality of Liege, says, that the wine was in like manner in their pipes, and that it was dug out, and cut into the form of wedges, and so carried off by gentlemen in hats or baskets, lib. ii. cap. 14.

‡ Ovid Trist. lib. iii. el. 10, ver. 23, 24.

Placentia,\* by reason that they went on to charge with their blood chilled, and their limbs benumbed with cold; whereas Hannibal had caused great fires to be dispersed quite through the camp, to warm his soldiers; and oil to be distributed amongst them, to the end that, anointing themselves, they might render their nerves more supple and active, and fortify the pores against the piercing air and freezing wind, that raged in that season.

The retreat the Greeks made from Babylon into their own country, is famous for the difficulties and calamities they had to overcome. Of which this was one: that being encountered in the mountains of Armenia with a horrible storm of snow, they lost all knowledge of the country, and of the roads, and, being shut up, were a day and a night without eating and drinking, during which most of their cattle died, many of themselves were starved, several struck blind with the driving of the hail and the glittering of the snow, many of them maimed in their fingers and toes, and many rendered stiff and motionless with the extremity of the cold, who had yet their understanding entire.

Alexander saw a nation where they bury the fruit-trees in winter, to defend them from the frost, and we also may see the same.

But concerning clothes, the king of Mexico changed his clothes four times a day, and never put them on more, employing those he left off in his continual liberalities and rewards; as also, neither pot, dish, nor other utensil of his kitchen, or table, was ever served in twice.

\* Tit. Liv. lib. xxi. cap. 54, 55.



## CHAPTER XXXVI.

*Of Cato the Younger.*

I AM not guilty of the common error of judging another by myself. I easily admit the differences among mankind. And though I find myself engaged to one form, I do not oblige mankind to it as many do; but believe and apprehend a thousand opposite modes of living, and, contrary to most men, more easily admit of differences than uniformity amongst us. I, as frankly as any would have me, discharge another being from my humours and principles, and consider him according to his own model. Though I am not continent myself, I nevertheless sincerely approve the continency of the Capuchins, and other religious orders, and am pleased with their way of living. I fancy that I should like to be in their place, and love and honour them the more for being what I am not. I desire, in particular, that we may be censured every man by himself, and would not be drawn into the consequence of common examples. My weakness does nothing alter the esteem I ought to have of the force and vigour of those who deserve it. *Sunt qui nihil suadent, quam quod se imitari posse confidunt.\** “There are some who persuade nothing but what they believe they can imitate themselves.” Crawling as I am upon the slime of the earth, I do not, for all that, cease to observe, up in the clouds, the inimitable height of some heroic souls; it is a great deal for me to have my judgment regular, if the effects cannot be so, and to maintain this sovereign part, at least, free from corruption: it is something to have my will good when my legs fail me. This age wherein we live, in our part of the world at least, is grown so stupid, that not only

\* Cicero de Or. ad Brutum, cap. 7.

the exercise, but the very notion of virtue is defective, and seems to be only college jargon :

— *Virtutem verba putant, ut  
Lucum ligna.\**

Words finely couch'd these men for virtue take ;  
As if each wood a sacred grove could make.

*Quam vereri deberent,† etiam si percipere non possent :* “ Which they ought to reverence, though they cannot comprehend it.” It is a mere gew-gaw to hang in a cabinet, or at the end of the tongue, as on the tip of the ear, for ornament only.

There are now no virtuous actions, and such as <sup>Vicious</sup> carry a show of virtue have yet nothing of its essence ; <sup>motives destroy the</sup> by reason that profit, glory, fear, custom, and other <sup>essence of</sup> such foreign causes, are generally incentives to them. The same may be said of justice, valour, and courtesy, in respect to others, and according to the face they appear with to the public. The practice of them is by no means virtue, because there is another end proposed, another moving cause. Virtue owns nothing to be hers, but what is done by herself, and for herself alone.

In that great battle of Potidæa,§ where the <sup>Why the</sup> Greeks, under Pausanias, defeated Mardonius and <sup>Spartan</sup> the Persians, the conquerors, according to their cus- <sup>refused the</sup> tom, coming to divide amongst them the glory of <sup>reward of</sup> the exploit, they attributed to the Spartan nation the <sup>valour to</sup> pre-eminence of valour in this engagement. The <sup>be person</sup> Spartans, who were great judges of virtue, when <sup>who signa-</sup> they came to determine to what particular man of <sup>lised him-</sup> their nation the honour was due, of having behaved <sup>self most in</sup> himself best upon this occasion, found that Aristo- <sup>battle.</sup>

\* Horace, ep. 6, lib. i. ver. 31, 32.

† Montaigne applies to virtue what Cicero here says of philosophy, and of those who presume to find fault with it.

‡ Cicero Tusc. Quæst. lib. v. cap. 2.

§ Montaigne has here put Potidæa for Platæa. Cornelius Nepos, in the Life of Pausanias, cap. 1. “ Hujus est illustrissimam prælium apud Platæas.”

demus\* had of all others hazarded his person with the greatest bravery. They did not, however, allow him any prize, because he had been incited by a desire to clear his reputation from the reproach it had incurred in the action at Thermopylæ.

Many people study to depreciate the noblest deeds of the ancients.

Our judgments are sick, and conformable to the corruption of our manners. I observe most of the wits of these times pretend to shine by obscuring the glory of the brave and generous actions of former ages, putting some vile construction upon them, and forging vain causes and motives of them. A mighty subtlety indeed! Show me the greatest and most unblemished action in life, and I will invent fifty bad ends to obscure it; God knows, whose intention will extend them out to the full, what diversity of images our internal wills are liable to; they do not censure so much from a spirit of malice, as from ignorance.

Montaigne acts quite contrary, and why.

The same pains and license that others take to detract from these illustrious names, I would willingly take to raise them higher. As for those rare figures that are culled out by the consent of the wisest men, for an example to the world, I should not stick to honour them more, as far as my invention would permit, by the circumstances of favourable construction. And we are to believe that the force of our invention is infinitely short of their merit. It is the duty of good men to paint virtue as beautiful as possible; and there would be no indecency in the case, should our passion a little transport us in favour of such sacred forms. What these people do to the contrary, they either do out of malice, or by the vice of confining their belief to their own capacity, as aforesaid, or which I am more inclined to think, for not having their sight strong, clear, and elevated enough, to conceive the splendour of virtue in her native purity; as Plutarch complains, that in his time some attributed the cause of the younger Cato's death to his fear of Cæsar, at which he seems very

Various opinions of the death of the younger Cato.

\* Herodot. lib. ix. p. 614.

angry, and with good reason; and by that a man may guess how much more he would have been offended with those who have attributed it to ambition; silly people! he would have performed a handsome, just, and generous action, though he had ignominy for his reward, rather than glory. That man was, in truth, a pattern, whom nature chose out to show to what height human virtue and constancy could arrive.

But I am not capable of handling so noble an argument; I will therefore only enter five Latin poets in the lists, contending in the praise of Cato; and inclusively for their own too. Now a man, well read in poetry, will think the first two, in comparison of the others, languishing; the third more vigorous, but overthrown by the extravagancy of his own force. He will then think, that there will be yet room for one or two gradations of invention to come to the fourth; and coming to mount the pitch of that, he will lift up his hand in admiration. At the last, the first by some space (but a space that he will swear is not to be filled up by any human wit), he will be astonished, he will not know where he is.

It is very surprising that we have more poets than judges and interpreters of poetry. It is easier to write a poem than to understand one. There is, indeed, a certain low poetry, that a man may judge by precepts and art; but the true, supreme, and divine poesy is above all rules and reason. And whoever discerns the beauty of it, with a strong and steady sight, sees no more than a flash of lightning. This is a sort of poesy that does not exercise, but ravishes and overwhelms our judgment. The fury that possesses him who is able to penetrate into it, also strikes a third man by hearing him repeat it; like a loadstone, that not only attracts the needle, but also communicates to it the virtue to attract others. And it is more evident at our theatres, that the sacred inspiration of the Muses, having first stirred up the poet to anger, sorrow, hatred, and to be out of himself,

Choice passages out of five poets in praise of Cato, compared and estimated by Montaigne.

Excellent poetry above rules.

whenever they will, does moreover by the poet possess the actor, and by the actor consequently all the spectators. So much do our passions hang and depend upon one another.

What sort  
of poetry  
Montaigne  
preferred.

Poetry has ever had that power over me from a child, to pierce and transport me; but this quick sense of it that is natural to me, has been variously handled by variety of forms, and not so much higher and lower (for they were ever the highest in every kind), as differing in colour. First, a gay and sprightly fluency, afterwards an acute and penetrating subtlety; and lastly, a mature and constant force. An example from Ovid, Lucan, and Virgil, will better express them. But our poets are beginning their career.

One says,

*Sit Cato dum vivit fama vel Cæsare major.\**

—— Let Cato's fame,

Whilst he shall live, eclipse great Cæsar's name.

A second says,

—— *Et invictum devictâ morte Catonem.†*

And Cato fell, invincible in death.

And the third, speaking of the civil wars between Cæsar and Pompey:

*Victrix causa Diis placuit, sed victa Catoni.‡*

—— Heaven approves

The conquering cause, the conquer'd Cato loves.

And the fourth, upon the praises of Cæsar, says,

*Et cuncta terrarum subacta,*

*Præter atrocem animum Catonis.§*

And conquer'd all where'er his eagle flew,

But stubborn Cato nothing could subdue.

The master of the choir, after having characterised the greatest Romans, ends thus:

—— *His dantem jura Catonem.||*

And Cato giving laws to all the rest.

\* Mart. lib. vi. epig. 32.

† Manil. Astronomicon, lib. iv. ver. 87.

‡ Lucan. lib. i. ver. 121.

§ Hor. Car. lib. ii. od. i. ver. 23, 24.

|| Virgil, Æneid. lib. viii. ver. 670.

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

*That we laugh and cry for the same Thing.*

WHEN we read in history, that Antigonus was very much displeased with his son, for presenting him the head of king Pyrrhus his enemy, just killed fighting against him, and that seeing it he heartily wept :\* that Rene, duke of Lorrain, also lamented the death of Charles, duke of Burgundy,† whom he had just defeated, and appeared in mourning at his funeral : and that, in the battle of Auroy‡ (which the count de Montfort obtained over Charles de Blois, his competitor for the duchy of Brittany), the conqueror, meeting the corpse of his enemy, was much afflicted at his death;§ we must not presently cry out :

*Et così aven che l'animo ciascuna,  
Sua passion sotto el contrario manto,  
Ricopre, con la vista hor' chiara, hor' bruna.¶*

There ev'ry person, whether of joy or woe,  
The passion of his mind can govern so,  
As when most griev'd, to show a visage clear,  
And melancholic, when best pleas'd, appear.

When Pompey's head was presented to Cæsar, history tells us, that he turned away his face, as from a sad and displeasing object. There had been so long a correspondence between them, in the management of the public affairs, so great a community of fortunes, so many mutual offices, and so near in alliance, that this countenance of his ought not to suffer under any misinterpretation ; or to be altogether suspected for false or counterfeit, as this author seems to believe :

\* Plutarch, in the Life of Pyrrhus. † Before Nancy in 1477.

‡ In 1364, in the reign of Charles V. king of France.

§ Froissart, vol. i. cap. 228. ¶ Petrarch, fol. 25, edit. of 1545.

——— *Tutumque putavit*  
*Jàm bonus esse socer, lachrymas non sponte cadentes*  
*Effudit, gemitusque expressit pectore læto.\**

——— And now he saw  
 'Twas safe to be a pious father-in-law,  
 He shed forc'd tears, and from a joyful breast,  
 Fetch'd sighs and groans.

For though it be true, that most of our actions are  
 deceitful, and that sometimes

*Hæredis fletus sub persona risus est.†*  
 The heir's dissembled tears, behind the skreen  
 Could one but peep, would joyful smiles be seen. }

Mankind  
 subject to  
 different  
 passions.

Yet, in judging of these accidents, we are to consider how much our souls are oftentimes agitated with different passions. And, as they say, that in our bodies there is a collection of divers humours, of which, that is the governing passion, which, according to the complexion we are of, is commonly most predominant in us; so, though the soul have in it divers motions to give it agitation, yet there must be one master of the field, yet not with so entire a conquest, but that through the flexibility and inconstancy of the soul, those of less authority may, upon occasion, re-assume their place, and make a little sally in turn. Thence it is that we see not only children, who simply follow nature, often laugh and cry at the same thing; but not one of us can boast, what journey soever he may have in hand that he has set his heart upon, but when he comes to part with his family and friends, he will find something within that troubles him; and though he refrain his tears, yet he puts foot in the stirrup with a sad and cloudy countenance. We may further observe, that whatever kindly flame have warmed the heart of well-born virgins, yet they are fain to be forced from about their mothers' necks, to be put to bed to their husbands; whatever this boon companion is pleased to say :

\* Lucan. lib. ix. ver. 1037.

† Aulus Gellius ex Noctes Publii Mimis, lib. xvii. cap. 14.

*Estne novis nuptis odio Venus, anne parentum  
Frustrantur falsis gaudia lachrymalis,  
Uberrim thalami quas intra limina fundunt ?  
Non, ita me Diwi, vera gemunt, junceriat.\**

Does the fair bride the sport so greatly dread,  
That she takes on so, when she's put to bed,  
Her parents joys t'allay with a feign'd tear?  
She does not cry in earnest, I dare swear.

So that it is not strange to lament the death of a person whom a man would by no means should be alive: when I rattle my man, I do it with all the mettle I have, and give him no feigned, but hearty real curses; but the heat being over, if he should stand in need of me, I should be very ready to do him good; for I instantly turn over a new leaf. When I call him calf and coxcomb, I do not mean to entail those titles upon him for ever; neither do I think I give myself the lie in calling him an honest fellow presently after. No one quality engrosses us abstractedly and universally. Were it not the sign of a fool to talk to one's self, there would hardly be a day or hour wherein I might not be heard to mutter to myself, and against myself, Wretched fool that I am! And yet I do not think that to be my character. He who seeing me one while cold, and presently very fond of my wife, believes the one or the other to be counterfeited, is an ass. Nero, taking leave of his mother, whom he sent to be drowned, was nevertheless sensible of some emotion at this farewell, and was struck with horror and pity. It is said, that the light of the sun is not one continuous thing, but that it darts new rays so quick one upon another, that we cannot perceive the intermission:

*Largus enim liquidi fons luminis æthereus Sol  
Irrigat assiduū cælum candore recenti,  
Suppetit atque novo confestim lumine lumen.†*

\* Catull. de Comâ Berenices, num. lxiv. ver. 15.

† Lucret. lib. v. ver. 282, &c.



For the æthereal sun that shines so bright,  
 Being a fountain large of liquid light,  
 With fresh rays sprinkles still the cheerful sky,  
 And with new light the light does still supply.

Just so the soul variously and imperceptibly darts out  
 her passions.

Xerxes  
 both trans-  
 ported with  
 joy and o-  
 verwhelm-  
 ed with  
 sadness at  
 the sight of  
 his vast  
 army.

Artabanus surprising once his nephew Xerxes,  
 chid him for the sudden alteration of his counte-  
 nance. As he was viewing his forces without num-  
 ber, passing over the Hellespont, for the Grecian  
 expedition, his heart leaped with joy; to see so many  
 thousands of men under his command; it also ap-  
 peared in the gaiety and alacrity of his counte-  
 nance.\* But his thoughts at the same instants sug-  
 gesting to him, that of so many lives, in an age at  
 most, there would not be one left, he knit his brows,  
 and grew sad, even to the shedding of tears.

The soul  
 does not  
 look upon  
 things with  
 one and the  
 same eye,  
 nor with  
 one and  
 the same  
 bias.

We have resolutely pursued the revenge of an  
 injury received, and felt a singular satisfaction in the  
 victory: yet we are sorry, though it is not for the  
 victory that we weep: there is nothing altered in  
 that: but the soul looks upon the thing with another  
 eye, and represents it to itself with another kind of  
 face: for every thing has many biasses and aspects.  
 Relations, old acquaintances, and friendships, possess  
 our imagination, and make it tender for the time,  
 according to their condition; but the revolution is  
 so quick, that we do not perceive it:

*Nil adeò fieri celeri ratione videtur,  
 Quàm si mens fieri proponit, et inchoat ipsa.  
 Ocius ergo animus quàm res se perciet ulla,  
 Ante oculos quarum in promptu natura videtur.†*

As no one action seems so swiftly done,  
 As what the mind as plann'd, and once begun,  
 This observation evidently proves,  
 The mind than other things more swiftly moves.

Therefore, while we desire to make a work com-  
 plete, and all of a piece, we deceive ourselves.

\* Herodot. lib. vii. p. 456, 457.

† Lucr. lib. iii. ver. 183, &c.

When Timoleon laments the murder he had committed, after so mature and generous deliberation, he does not lament the liberty restored to his country, he does not lament the tyrant, but he laments his brother: one part of his duty is performed, let us give him leave to perform the other.

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## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

*Of Solitude.*

LET us lay aside that old comparison between the active and the solitary life; and as for the fine saying which is made a cloke for ambition and avarice, "That we are not born for ourselves, but for the public," let us boldly appeal to those who are in public affairs, let them lay their hands upon their hearts, and then say whether, on the contrary, they do not rather aspire to titles and offices, and that hurry of the world, to make their private advantage at the public expense. The corrupt means by which they push their way in our time, manifestly declare that their end cannot be very good. Let us then tell ambition, that it is she herself who gives us a taste of solitude; for what does she so much avoid as society? What does she so much seek as elbow-room? (A man may do well or ill every where.) But if what Bias says be true, that the greatest part is the worst part; or what the Preacher says, that there is not one good of a thousand:

*Rari quippe boni: numero vix sunt totidem, quot  
Thebarum portæ, vel divitis ostia Nili.\**

How few good men are number'd on this soil!  
Scarce more than gates of Thebes, or mouths of Nile,

the contagion is very dangerous in the crowd.

\* Juv. sat. xiii. ver. 26, 27.

To associate with the wicked fatal.

There is a necessity for men either to imitate others, or to hate them:† both are to be avoided; the former, lest we become like to the wicked, because they are many; the latter, for fear of hating the many, because they are unlike us. And merchants that go to sea have reason to be cautious, that those who embark with them in the same bottom be neither dissolute, blasphemous, nor vicious other ways; looking upon such society as unfortunate. And therefore it was, that Bias‡ pleasantly said to some, who, being with him in a dangerous storm, implored the assistance of the gods, “Hold your peace, that they may not know you are in my company.” And as a more forcible example, Alluquerque, viceroy in the Indies, for Emanuel king of Portugal, being in extreme peril of shipwreck, took a little boy upon his shoulders, for this only end; that being a sharer of their danger, his innocence might serve to protect him, and to recommend him to the divine favour, that they might get to shore: a wise man may indeed live every where content, and be retired even in the crowd of a palace; but if it be left to his own choice he will tell you, that he would fly the very sight of the latter; he can endure it, if need be; but if it be left to himself, he will choose the first. He does not think himself sufficiently rid of vice, if he must yet contend with it in other men: Charondas punished those for ill men, who were convicted of keeping ill company.† There is nothing so unsociable, and sociable, as man; the one by his vice, the other by his nature. And Antisthenes,‡ in my opinion, did not give a satisfactory answer, when he

\* These reflections were a genuine translation from Seneca, ep. 7, who has these very words: “Necesse est aut imiteris aut oderis. “Utrumque autem devitandum est, ne vel simili, malis fias, quia multi sunt, necne inimicus multis, quia dissimiles sunt.”

† Diog. Laert. in the Life of Bias, lib. i. sect. 6.

‡ Diodorus of Sicily, lib. xii. ch. 4.

§ Diog. Laert. in the Life of Antisthenes.

was reproached with frequenting ill company, by saying, "That the physicians lived well amongst the sick;" for if they contribute to the health of the sick, no doubt but by the contagion, continual sight of, and familiarity with diseases, they must of necessity impair their own health.

Now the end I suppose is all one, to live at more leisure, and at greater ease: but men do not always take the right course to it; for they often think they have taken leave of business, when they have only exchanged one employment for another. There is little less trouble in governing a family, than a whole kingdom; wherever the mind is perplexed, it is in an entire disorder, and domestic employments are not less troublesome for being less important. Moreover, because we have left the court and the exchange, we are not rid of the principal vexations of life:

The aim of solitude.

——— *Ratio, et prudentia curas,  
Non locus effusi latè maris arbiter aufert.\**

Reason and prudence our affections ease,  
Not the bold site that wide commands the seas.

Our ambition, our avarice, irresolution, fears, and inordinate desires, do not leave us when we change our country:

Solitude does not free us from our vices.

——— *Et  
Post equitem sedet atra cura.†*

And when he rides, black Care sits close behind.

Our passions oft follow us even to cloisters, and philosophical schools; nor deserts, nor caves, hair-shirts, nor fasts, can disengage us from them:

——— *Hæret lateri lethalis arundo.‡*

The fatal shaft sticks to the wounded side.

A person telling Socrates,§ that such a one was nothing improved by his travels, "No wonder," said he, "for he travelled along with himself:"

\* Hor. lib. i. epist. 11, ver. 25, 26.

† Virg. *Æneid*, lib. iv. ver. 73.

‡ Ib. lib. iii. ode 1, ver. 40.

§ Senec. epist. 104.

— *Quid terras alio calentes  
Sole mutamus ? patriâ quis exul  
Se quoque fugit ?\**

To change our native soil, why should we run,  
And seek one warmed by a fiercer sun ?  
For who in exile ever yet could find,  
He went abroad, and left himself behind ?

If a man do not first discharge both himself and his mind, of the burden with which he is oppressed, motion will but make it press the harder : as in a ship, the lading is of less encumbrance, when it is well settled. You do a sick man more harm than good, in removing him from place to place ; you confirm the disease by stirring him, as stakes sink deeper into the earth, by being moved up and down. And, therefore, it is not enough to be remote from the public ; it is not enough to shift the situation ; a man must fly from the popular dispositions that have taken possession of his soul, he must lay himself aside, and come to himself again :

— *Rupi jam vincula, dicas.  
Nam et luctata canis nodum arripit : attamen illi  
Cum fugit, à collo trahitur pars longa catenæ.†*

Thou'lt say, perhaps, that thou hast broke the chain,  
Why, so the dog has gnaw'd the knot in 'twain  
That ty'd him there ; but as he flies, he feels  
The pond'rous chain still rattling at his heels.

We still carry our fetters along with us ; it is not an absolute liberty ; we still look back upon what we have left behind us ; our heads are full of it :

— *Nisi purgatum est pectus, quæ prælia nobis  
Atque pericula tunc ingratis insinuandum ?  
Quantæ conscindunt hominum cupidinis acres  
Sollicitum curæ, quantique perinde timores ?  
Quidve superbia, spurcitiæ, petulantia, quantas  
Efficiunt clades, quid luxus, desidiesque ?†*

Unless the mind be purg'd, what conflicts dire,  
And dangers will not ev'ry thought inspire ?

\* Hor. lib. ii. ode 16, ver. 18, &c.

† Persius, sat. v. ver. 158, &c.

‡ Lucret. lib. v. ver. 44—49.

Th' ungrateful man, how many bitter cares  
 Incessant gall, and then how many fears?  
 What horrid massacres from pride ensue,  
 From sloth, lust, petulance, and from lux'ry too?

Our disease is in the mind, which cannot escape from itself:

In what  
 true soli-  
 tude con-  
 sists.

*In culpa est animus, qui se non effugit unquam.\**

Still in the mind the fault doth lie,  
 That never from itself can fly.

and is therefore to be called in, and contracted. This is the true solitude, and such as may be enjoyed even in populous cities, and the courts of kings; though more commodiously apart.

Now if we will attempt to live alone, and to get rid of company, let us so order it, that our contentment may be in our own power. Let us dissolve all obligations that attach us to others: let us be so far our own masters, that we may live alone in good earnest, and live at our ease too.

Stilpo having escaped from the fire that consumed the city where he lived, by which his wife, children, with all his substance were destroyed, Demetrius Poliorcetes, seeing his countenance not dismayed in so great a ruin of his country, asked him if he had received no loss?† To which he made answer, No; and that, God be thanked, nothing was lost of his. This also was the meaning of the philosopher Antisthenes, when he pleasantly said,‡ that men should only furnish themselves with such things as could float on the water, and swim with the owner to escape a shipwreck: and certainly a wise man loses nothing, if he save but himself. When the city of Nola was ruined by the barbarians, Paulinus, who was bishop of that place, having there lost all he had, and being himself a prisoner, prayed after this manner,§ “O Lord, defend me from being sensible of

Constancy  
 in the midst  
 of misfor-  
 tunes.

\* Hor. lib. i. epist. 14.

† Senec. epist. 9.

‡ Diogenes Laert. in the Life of Antisthenes.

§ Augustin. de Civitate Dei, lib. i. cap. xviii.

“ this loss ; for thou knowest, they have yet touched  
 “ nothing that I could call mine ;” the riches that  
 made him rich, and the goods that made him good,  
 remained still entire.

The true  
 treasure  
 which sets  
 a man  
 above in-  
 juries.

This it is to make choice of treasures that can  
 secure themselves from injury, and to hide them in  
 a place where no one can enter, and which cannot  
 be betrayed by any but ourselves. Wives, children,  
 goods, and especially health, are means of comfort ;  
 but we are not to set our hearts upon them, as that  
 they become absolutely necessary to our happiness :  
 we must reserve a back-room, wholly our own, and  
 entirely free, wherein to fix our liberty, our principal  
 retreat and solitude. Here must we have converse  
 with ourselves, and so privately, that no knowledge  
 or communication of any foreign concern, be ad-  
 mitted ; there to talk and to laugh, as if without  
 wife, children, goods, train, or attendance, to the  
 end, that when we happen to lose any or all of these  
 it may be no new thing to us to be without them.  
 We have a mind pliable of itself, that is capable of  
 getting company, has wherewithal to attack and to  
 defend, to receive and to give : let us not then fear  
 in this solitude, to languish under an uncomfortable  
 idleness :

*In solis sis tibi turba locis.\**

In solitary places be  
 Unto thyself good company.

Men put  
 themselves  
 into a hurry  
 for a thou-  
 sand things  
 that do not  
 concern  
 them.

Virtue is satisfied with herself, without discipline,  
 without words, without effects. In our ordinary  
 actions, there is not one of a thousand that con-  
 cerns ourselves : he that thou seest scrambling up  
 the ruins of that wall, furious, and out of his mind,  
 against whom so many muskets are levelled ; and  
 that other, all over scars, pale, and fainting with  
 hunger, and yet resolved rather to die than to open  
 his gate to him, dost thou think that these men are  
 there upon their own account ? No ; perhaps, in the

\* Tibull. lib. iv. eleg. xiii. ver. 12.

behalf of one whom they never saw, and that never concerns himself what becomes of them, but lies wallowing the while in sloth and pleasure: this other slaving, blear-eyed, slovenly fellow, that thou seest come out of his study after midnight, dost thou think he has been tumbling over books, to learn how to become a better man, wiser, and more content? No such matter, he will there end his days, but he will teach posterity the measure of Plautus's verses, and the orthography of a Latin word: who does not voluntarily exchange his health, his repose, and his very life, for reputation and glory, the most useless, frivolous, and false coin, that is current amongst us? Our own death does not sufficiently terrify us, but we moreover charge ourselves with that of our wives, children, and family: our own affairs do not afford us anxiety enough, but we also meddle with those of our neighbours and friends, to crack our brains, and torment us:

*Vah, quenquamne hominem in animum instituere, aut  
Parare, quod sit carius, quàm ipse est sibi?\**

Alas! what mortal will be so unwise,  
Any thing dearer than himself to prize?

Solitude seems to me to be the most becoming and rational, in such as have already employed their most active and flourishing age in the world's service; according to the example of Thales. <sup>To whom solitude is most becoming.</sup> It is enough to have lived for others, let us at least live out the small remnant of life for ourselves; let us now call in our thoughts and intentions to ourselves, and consult our own ease: it is no light thing to make a sure retreat; there will be enough to do, without a mixture of other enterprises. Since God gives us leisure to prepare for our remove, let us make ready, truss our baggage, take leave betimes of the company; let us disentangle ourselves from those violent importunities that engage us elsewhere,

\* Ter. Adelph. act. 1, scen. i. ver. 13, 14.



and alienate us from ourselves: we must break the knot of our obligations, how strong soever, and no longer love this or that, but espouse nothing beside ourselves: that is to say, let the remainder be our own; but not so joined, and so close rivetted, as not to be forced away without slaying us, and tearing away part of us with it.

Of what importance it is for a man to know that he is his own master.

The greatest thing in the world is for a person to know that he is his own master. It is time to wear ourselves from society, when we cannot add any thing to it; and he that is not in a condition to lend must take care not to borrow. Our forces and abilities fail us; let us call them in, and keep them to ourselves: he that can, within himself, obliterate and jumble together the offices of so many friendships, and of society, let him do it: in this decay of nature, which renders him useless, burdensome, and troublesome to others, let him take care not to become useless, burdensome, and uneasy to himself: let him sooth and caress himself; and, above all things, be sure to govern himself with awe and reverence to his reason and conscience, so as to be ashamed to make a false step in their presence. *Rarum est enim, ut satis se quisque vereatur.\** “For it is rarely seen that men have respect and reverence enough for themselves.” Socrates says, that youth are to cause themselves to be instructed, grown men to exercise themselves in well doing, and old men to retire from all civil and military employments, living at their own discretion, without the obligation to any office.

The constitutions most fitted for retirement.

There are some complexions more proper for these precepts of retirement than others. Such as are of a moist and cold constitution, and of a tender will and affection, and which is not easily subdued or employed, as I am, both by nature and reason, will sooner incline to this advice than active and busy souls, which embrace all, engage in all, and are hot

\* Pythagoras.

upon every thing; who offer, present, and give themselves up to every occasion. We are to serve ourselves with these accidental and extraneous things, so far as they are pleasant to us, but by no means to lay our principal foundation there. This is no true one, neither nature nor reason allow it so to be, and why therefore should we, contrary to their laws, make our own contentment a slave to the power of another? To anticipate also the accidents of fortune, and to deprive ourselves of those advantages we have in our own hands, as several have done out of devotion, and some philosophers by reason; to serve a man's self, to lie hard, to put out our own eyes, throw wealth into the river, and to seek out grief (some by the uneasiness and misery of this life, to acquire bliss in another; others, by laying themselves low, to avoid the danger of a new fall), are acts of an excessive virtue. The stoutest and most obstinate natures render even their secret retirements glorious and exemplary:

—*Tuta et parvula laudo,  
Cum res deficiunt; satis inter vilia fortis.  
Verum, ubi quid melius contingit et unctius, idem  
Vos sapere, et solos aio bene vivere, quorum  
Conspicitur nitidis fundata pecunia villis.\**

Thus I, when better entertainments fail,  
Bravely condescend a plain and frugal meal;  
On cheaper suppers, show myself full wise;  
But if some dainties more luxurious rise,  
I call those wise and blest, and only those,  
Whose large estate their splendid mansion shows.

A great deal less would serve my turn well enough. It is enough for me, under fortune's favour, to prepare myself for her disgrace, and, being at my ease, to represent to myself, as far as my imagination can stretch, the ill to come; as we do at justs, and tiltings, where we counterfeit a war in the greatest calm

\* Hor. lib. i. epist. 15, ver. 42—46.

of peace. I do not think Arcesilaus\* the philosopher a whit the more extravagant, for knowing that he made use of gold and silver vessels, when his fortune allowed him so to do ; but have a better opinion of him, than if he had denied himself what he used with liberality and moderation.

The limits  
of natural  
necessities.

I see the utmost limits of natural necessity, and considering the poor man begging at my door oftentimes more jocund and healthy than I am, I put myself in his place, and attempt to dress my mind after his mode, running, in like manner, over other examples ; though I fancy death, poverty, contempt, and sickness treading on my heels, I easily resolve not to be afraid of what one, so much my inferior, bears with so much patience, and am not willing to believe that a less understanding can do more than a greater, or that argument can do as much as custom : and knowing how trifling these accidental conveniences are, I do not forget, in the height of all my enjoyments, to make my chief prayer to Almighty God, that he will please to render me content with myself, and the condition wherein I am. I see several young men, very gay and frolicsome, who nevertheless keep a heap of pills in their trunks at home, to take when the rheum shall seize them, which they fear so much the less, because they think they have a remedy at hand. Every one should do the same ; and, moreover, if they find themselves subject to some more violent disease, should furnish themselves with such medicines as may benumb and stupify the part.

What oc-  
cupation  
suits a soli-  
tary life.

The employment a man should choose for such a life, ought neither to be laborious nor tedious, otherwise it is to no purpose at all to be retired : and this depends upon every one's particular taste ; mine has no manner of bias to husbandry, and such as love it ought to apply themselves to it with moderation :

\* Diog. Laert. in the Life of Arcesilaus, lib. iv. sect. 38.

*Conantur sibi res, non se submittere rebus.\**

A man should to himself his business fit,  
But not to servile drudgery submit.

Husbandry is otherwise a very servile employment, as Sallust tells us; though some parts of it are less so than others, as the care of gardens, which Xenophon attributes to Cyrus; and a mean may be found out between that low and sordid application, so full of solicitude, which is seen in men who make it their entire business and study, and that stupid and extraordinary negligence letting all things go at random:

—*Democriti pecus edit agellos,  
Cultaque, dum peregrè est animus sine corpore velox.†*

Democritus' cattle spoils his fruits and corn,  
Whilst he aloft on fancy's wings is born.

But let us hear what advice the younger Pliny gives his friend Cornelius Rufus† upon the subject of solitude: I advise thee, in the profound but plentiful retirement wherein thou art, to leave to thy servants the care of thy husbandry, and to addict thyself to the study of letters, in order to extract from thence something that may be for ever thine own. By which he means reputation; a humour like Cicero's, who says, that he would employ his solitude and retirement from public affairs to acquire by his writings an immortal life: With what view Pliny and Cicero advised retirement.

—*Usque adeòne  
Scire tuum nihil est, nisi te scire hoc sciat alter?‡*

Must thou thy knowledge then be forc'd to own  
Useless to thee, unless to others known?

It appears to be reason, when a man talks of retiring from the world, that he should look quite out of himself. These do it but by halves. They design

\* Hor. epist. 1. lib. i. ver. 19.

† Ibid. epist. 12. lib. i. ver. 12, 13.

‡ In epist. 3. lib. i. to Caninius Rufus.

§ Pers. sat. 4. ver. 26, 27.

well enough for themselves, it is true, when they shall be no more in it; but still they pretend to extract the fruits of that design from the world, though absent from it, by a supposition ridiculously contradictory.

What is to be thought of the solitude which is courted for the sake of devotion,

The imagination of those who seek solitude upon the account of devotion, filling their hopes with certainty of divine promises in the other life, is much more rationally founded. They propose to themselves God, an infinite object in goodness and power. The soul has there wherewithal, at full liberty, to satiate her desires. Afflictions and pains turn to their advantage, while they are employed in the acquisition of health, and joys everlasting. Death is to be wished for, as it is the passage to so perfect a condition. The severity of the rules they impose upon themselves is soon softened by custom, and their carnal appetites damped and subdued by resisting them; for they are only supported by use and exercise. This sole end, therefore, viz. another happy and immortal life, justly merits that we should abandon the pleasures and conveniences of this. And he that can really and constantly inflame his soul with the ardour of his lively faith and hope, secures to himself in this solitude the most voluptuous and delicious life that can be enjoyed.

The deficiency of Pliny's and Cicero's advice.

Neither the end, then, nor the means of this advice of Pliny's,\* pleases me, for we often fall out of the frying-pan into the fire. This book-work is as painful as any other, and as great an enemy to health, which ought to be the chief care of every man; neither ought a man to be lulled with the pleasure of it, which is the same that destroys the frugal, the avaricious, the voluptuous, and the ambitious man. The wise give us caution enough to beware of the treachery of our desires, and to distinguish true and genuine pleasures from such as are mixed and compli-

\* Viz. The advice of Pliny and Cicero, that we should quit business, and apply to study, in order to get immortal fame by some composition.

cated with great pain. For the greatest part of pleasures, say they, tickle and caress, only to strangle us, like those thieves the Egyptians called Philetas;\* and we should have care of drinking too much when we have the head-ache : but pleasure, to deceive us, marches before, and conceals her train. Books are pleasant; but if by too much conversing with them we impair our health, and spoil our good humour, two of the best enjoyments we have, let us give it over and quit them; I for my part am one of those who think that no fruit derived from them can recompense so great a loss. As men who feel themselves weakened by a long series of indisposition give themselves up at last to the mercy of medicine, and prescribe to themselves certain rules of living, which they are never more to transgress; so he who retires, weary of and disgusted with the common way of living, ought to model this new one he enters into by the rules of reason. He ought to have taken leave of all sorts of labour, what face soever it bears, to shake off all those passions in general, which disturb the tranquillity of body and soul, and to choose the way that best suits with his own humour :

*Unusquisque sua noverit ire via.†*

We each know best to what we are inclined.

In husbandry, study, hunting, and all other exercises, men are to proceed to the utmost limits of pleasure; but must take heed of engaging further, where begins a mixture of trouble. We are to reserve so much occupation and employment only, as is necessary to keep us in breath, and to defend us from the inconveniences, which the other extreme, of a dull and stupid laziness, brings along with it.

There are some sterile, knotty sciences, and chiefly hammered out for the crowd; let such be left to them who are engaged in the public service; I, for my part, care for no other books, but either such as

Certain sciences with which the mind must not be embarrassed.

\* Seneca, epist. 51.

† Propert. lib. ii. eleg. xxv. ver. 38.

are pleasant and easy, to delight me, or those that comfort and instruct me how to regulate my life and death :

—*Tacitum sylvas inter reptare salubres,  
Curantem quidquid dignum sapiente bonoque est.\**

Silently meditating in the groves,  
What best a wise and honest man behoves.

Wiser men may carve to themselves a repose wholly spiritual, as they have great force and vigour of mind ; but for me, who have not an extraordinary soul, I find it very necessary to support myself with bodily conveniences ; and age having of late deprived me of those pleasures that were most to my fancy, I whet my appetite to those that remain, and are more suitable to this other season. We ought to take fast hold of the pleasures of life, which our years, one after another, snatch away from us :

—*Carpeamus dulcia ; nostrum est  
Quod vivis : cinis, et manes, et fabula fiet.†*

Let us enjoy life's sweets, for shortly we,  
Ashes, pale ghosts, and fables, all shall be.

Glory and  
tranquillity  
incompat-  
ble.

Now as to glory, the end that Pliny and Cicero propose to us, I am far from putting it to the account ; for ambition is the most contrary quality to solitude ; and glory and repose are so inconsistent, that they cannot possibly inhabit in one and the same place. In my opinion, these have only their arms and legs disengaged from the crowd, their affections remaining attached to it more than ever :

*Tun', vetule, auriculis alienis colligis escas ? †*

Dost thou, old dotard, at these years,  
Steal scraps of verse for others ears ?

They are only retired to take a better leap, and, by a stronger motion, to make the greater push into the crowd. Will you see how they shoot short ?

\* Hor. lib. i. epist. iv. ver. 4, 5,    † Persius, sat. v. ver. 151, &c.

† Ibid. sat. i. ver. 22.

Let us put into the balance the advice of two philosophers of two very different sects,\* writing, the one to Idomeneus, the other to Lucilius, their friends, to draw them to solitude, from worldly honours, and the administration of public affairs. You have, say they, hitherto lived swimming and floating; come now, and die in the harbour: you have given the former part of your life to the light, give what remains to the shade. It is impossible to give over business, if you do not quit the fruit of it: therefore disengage yourselves from all concern for fame and glory. It is to be feared, the lustre of your former actions will throw too much light upon you, and follow you into your most private retreat: quit, with other pleasures, that which proceeds from the approbation of another: and as to your knowledge and parts, never concern yourselves,† they will not lose their effect, if yourselves be ever the better for them. Remember him, who being asked, “Why he took so much pains in an art,‡ that could come to the knowledge of but few persons?” “A few are enough for me,” replied he, “I have enough of one, I have enough of never a one.” He said true, you and a companion are theatre enough for one another,§ or you for yourself.|| Be you one to the whole people, and the whole people but one to you.¶ It is an unworthy ambition for a man to think to derive glory from his sloth and privacy: you are to do like the beasts of chase,\*\* who put out the track at the entrance into their den. You are no more to concern yourselves what the world says of you, but what you are to say of yourselves: retire within yourselves, but first prepare for your re-

\* Epicurus and Seneca. See Seneca, ep. xxi.

† “Cur ego, inquis, ista didici? Non est quod timeas ne operam perdideris: Tibi didicisti.” Seneca, epist. 7.

‡ Senec. ep. 7.

§ Id. Ibid.

¶ “Satis magnum alter alteri theatrum sumus.” This is what Epicurus wrote to one of his friends.

¶ Seneca ascribes this saying to Democritus, ep. 7.

\*\* Seneca, ep. 68.



ception.\* It were a folly to trust yourselves in your own hands, if you cannot govern yourselves:† a man may as well miscarry alone, as in company; till you have become such persons, before whom you dare not trip, and have conceived a respect for yourselves. *Versentur species honestæ animo* ‡ “Let just and honest things be still represented to the mind.” Present continually to your imagination, Cato, Phocion, and Aristides, in whose presence fools themselves would hide their faults; and make them controllers of all your intentions. Should they deviate any where, your respect to them will again set you right; they will keep you in this way of being contented with yourselves; to borrow nothing of any but from yourselves; to stop and fix your souls in certain limited thoughts, wherein they may please themselves, and having understood the true and real goods, which men the more enjoy the more they understand them, to rest satisfied, without desire for the enjoyment or prolongation of life or fame. This is the precept of genuine philosophy, not of a boasting and prating philosophy, such as that of the two first.§

## CHAPTER XXXIX.

### *An Observation concerning Cicero, &c.*

The ambition of Cicero and Pliny.

ONE word more, by way of comparison between this couple. There are to be gathered out of the

\* Seneca, ep. 68.

† “Prodest sine dubio custodem sibi imposuisse, et habere quem respicias, quem interesse tuis cogitationibus judices. Omnia nobis mala solitudo persuadet. Cum jam profeceris ut sit tibi etiam tui reverentia, licebit dimittas pædagogum. Interim te aliquorum auctoritate custodi. Aut Cato ille sit, aut Scipio, aut Lælius, aut cujus interventa perditū quoque homines vitia suppresserent, dum te efficis coram quo peccare non audis.” *Sepec. ep. 25.*

‡ Cicero, *Tusc. Quæst. lib. ii. cap. 12.*

§ Pliny the younger, and Cicero.

writings of Cicero, and this younger Pliny (who, in my opinion, little resembles his uncle in his humour), infinite testimonies of a nature beyond measure ambitious, and amongst others, this for one, that they both, in the face of all the world, solicited the historians of their time,\* not to forget them in their memoirs; and fortune, as if in spite, has transmitted the vanity of those requests upon record down to the present age, and has long since damned the histories.

But this exceeds all meanness of spirit, in persons of such quality as they were, to think to derive any great renown from babbling and prating; even by the publishing of their private letters to their friends, so that as some of them were never sent, the opportunity being lost, they nevertheless exposed them to the light, with this worthy excuse, that they were unwilling their labours and lucubrations should be lost. Was it not very well becoming two consuls of Rome, sovereign magistrates of the republic that commanded the world, to spend their time in contriving quaint and elegant letters, thence to gain the reputation of being masters of their own mother tongue? What could a pitiful schoolmaster have done worse, who by such a knowledge gets his living?

If the acts of Xenophon and Cæsar, had not very far transcended their eloquence, I scarce believe they would ever have taken the pains to have written them. They made it their business to recommend not their speeches, but their actions.

\* Cicero writing to Luceius, ep. 12, lib. v. and Pliny to Tacitus, ep. 33, lib. vii. with this most remarkable difference, that the first earnestly desires his friend, not to attach himself scrupulously to the rules of, but boldly to leap the barriers of truth in his favour. "Te planè etiam atque etiam rogo, ut et ornēs ea vehementius etiam quam fortasse sentis et in ea leges historiæ negligas;" whereas Pliny declares expressly, that he does not desire Tacitus to give the least offence to the truth, "Quanquam non exigo ut excedas rei actæ modum. Nam nec historia debet egredi veritatem, et honeste factis veritas sufficit." One would have thought that Montaigne should, in justice to Pliny, have distinguished him from Cicero in this particular.

To what end Cicero's and Pliny's Familiar Epistles were published.

Why Xenophon and Cæsar wrote their own histories.

Terence's  
comedies  
written by Sci-  
pio and  
Lælius.

And could the perfection of eloquence add any fame suitable to the age of a great person, certainly Scipio and Lælius had never resigned the honour of their comedies, with all the luxuriance and delicacy of the Latin tongue, to an African slave<sup>\*</sup>; for that the work was theirs, its beauty and excellence sufficiently evince; besides, Terence himself confesses as much, and I should take it ill of any one that should dispossess me of that belief.

Qualities  
which are  
not suitable  
to a man's  
rank in the  
world, can-  
not do him  
honour.

It is a kind of mockery, and affront, to extol a man for qualities misbecoming his condition, though otherwise commendable in themselves; as if a man should commend a king, for being a good painter, a good architect, a good marksman, or a good runner at the ring; commendations that add no honour, unless mentioned in the train of those that more properly become him, namely, his justice, and the science of governing and conducting his people both in peace and war. Thus agriculture did honour to Cyrus, and eloquence and learning to Charlemagne. I have, in my time, known some who, by a knack of writing, have got both their titles and livelihood, disown their apprentice-age, purposely corrupt their style, and affect the ignorance of so vulgar a quality (which our nation observes to be rarely seen in very learned hands) to seek a reputation by better qualities.

Great men  
are not to  
be praised  
for com-  
mon things.

Demosthenes's companions in the embassy to Philip, extolling that prince for being handsome, eloquent, and a hearty toper; Demosthenes replied, "That those were commendations fitter for a woman, an advocate, a lawyer, or a sponge, than for a king:"\*

*Imperet bellante prior, jacentem  
Lenis in hostem.†*

First let his empire from his valour flow,  
And then from mercy on a prostrate foe.

\* Plutarch, in the Life of Demosthenes, cap. 4.

† Horat. Carm. Secul. ver. 51, 52.

It is not his profession to know either how to hunt or to dance well :

*Orabunt causas alii, cœlique meatus  
Describent radio, et fulgentia sidera dicent ;  
Hic regere imperio populos sciat.\**

Let others plead at the litigious bar,  
Describe the spheres, point out each twinkling star,  
This man can rule, a greater art by far.

Plutarch says, that to appear so excellent in these less necessary qualities, is to produce witness against a man's self, that he has spent his time and applied his study ill, which ought to have been employed in things more necessary and useful. Philip, king of Macedon, therefore, having heard that Alexander, his son, sang once at a feast to the wonder and envy of the best musicians there: " Art not thou ashamed," said he to him, " to sing so well?"† And to the same Philip, a musician said, with whom he was disputing about some things concerning his art: " Heaven forbid! Sir," said he, " that so great a misfortune should ever befall you, as to understand these things better than I!"‡ A king should be able to answer, as Iphicrates did the orator, who pressed upon him, in his invective, after this manner, " And what art thou, that thou bravest at this rate? Art thou a man at arms, art thou an archer? art thou a pike-man? I am none of all this;§ but " I know how to command all these." And Antisthenes took it for an argument, not much to the praise of Ismenias, that he was cried up for playing excellently upon the flute.

Great men  
should not  
excel in  
things not  
altogether  
necessary.

I know, very well, that when I hear any one insist upon the language of essays, I had rather a great deal he would say nothing. It is not so much to elevate the style, as to depress the sense; and so

The merit  
of Montaigne's Es-  
says.

\* Virg. *Æn.* lib. vi. ver. 844.

† Plutarch, in the Life of Pericles, cap. 1.

‡ In a tract of Plutarch, how to distinguish the flatterer from the friend, cap. 25.

§ Plutarch, in his Treatise of Fortune.

much the more offensively, as they do it more obliquely. Yet am I much deceived, if many other essayists enter farther into the matter, and how well or ill soever, if any other writer has scattered things more material, or at least bolder, upon paper than myself. To make them the more regular, I only muster up the heads; should I annex the sequel, I should strangely enlarge this volume: and how many stories have I scattered up and down in this book, that I only touch upon, which, should any one more curiously search into, they would find matter enough to produce infinite essays: neither those stories, nor my allegations always serve simply for example, authority, or ornament; I do not regard them only for the use I make of them: they often carry, besides what I apply them to, the seed of a more rich and a bolder matter, and sometimes contrarywise a more delicate sound both to myself, who will express no more of it in this place, and to others who shall happen to be of my taste. But to return to the talent of speaking; I find no great choice between not knowing to speak any thing but very ill, and not knowing any thing but speaking well. *Non est ornamentum virile concinnitas.*\* “Neatness of style is no manly ornament.” The sages tell us, that as to what concerns knowledge, there is nothing but philosophy; and as to what concerns effects, nothing but virtue, that is generally proper to all degrees, and to all orders.

Epicurus  
and Seneca  
set in op-  
position to  
Pliny and  
Cicero.

There is something like this in these two other philosophers, for they also promise eternity to the letters which they write to their friends; but it is after another manner, and by accommodating themselves, for a good end, to the vanity of another; for they write to them, that if the concern of making themselves known to future ages, and the thirst of glory, yet detain them in the management of public affairs, and make them fear the solitude and retire-

\* Sen. ep. 95.

ment to which they would persuade them ; let them never trouble themselves more about it,\* forasmuch as they shall have credit enough with posterity to assure them, that were there nothing else but the very letters thus writ to them, those letters will render their names as famous as their own public actions could do. And besides this difference, these are not frothy and empty letters, that have nothing but well chosen words, in a proper cadence, to support them, but rather replete and abounding with fine lessons of wisdom by which a man may render himself not more eloquent, but more wise ; and that instruct us not to speak but to do well : away with that eloquence which so enchants us with its harmony, that we would study it more than things ; unless you think that of Cicero so perfect, as to form a complete body of itself.

And of him I shall add one story more, which we read of him to this purpose, whereby we shall be let fully into his temper. He was to make an oration in public, and found himself a littled straitened in time, to fit his words to please him, when Eros,† one of his slaves, brought him word that the audience was deferred till the next day, at which he was so ravished with joy, that he enfranchised him for the good news.

To what has been already said on the subject of letters, let me add, that it is a kind of writing wherein my friends think I can do something ; †

Cicero very  
fond of elo-  
quence.

Mon-  
taigne's ge-  
nius for the  
epistolary  
style.

\* When Epicurus wrote to Idomeneus, then the slave of rigid power, and who had great affairs in his hands, to persuade him from a gay life, to the pursuit of true and solid glory, " If," said he, " you are fond of glory, my epistles will make you more celebrated than all things that you admire, and for which you are admired." Seneca, ep. 21, who, in the same epistle, says to his friend Lucilius, " The very thing which Epicurus could promise to his friend, I promise to you, Lucilius ; I shall be in the favour of posterity : it is in my power to bring out names that shall be lasting."

† Plutarch, in his Notable Sayings of Kings, &c. in the article of Cicero.

‡ I have met with eight letters from Montaigne, wherewith I shall enrich this edition, that may give some idea of what he here says.

Montaigne's version to the extravagant compliments in letters.

and I should rather have chose to publish my whimsies in that than any other form, did I know to whom to write ; but I wanted such a settled correspondence as I once had, to attract me to it, to raise my fancy, and to support me. For to traffic with the wind, as some others have done, and to forge vain names to correspond with, on a serious subject, I could never do it but in a dream, being a sworn enemy to all manner of fiction : I would have been more diligent, and more confidently secure, had I had a hearty friend, to whom to address, than to consider the different aspects of a whole people, and I am deceived if I had not succeeded better. I have naturally a comic and familiar style ; but it is a peculiar one, and not proper for public business, my language being in all respects, too compact, irregular, abrupt, and singular ; and as to letters of ceremony, that have no other substance than a fine chain of courteous words, I am wholly to seek ; I have neither faculty, nor relish, for those tedious offers of service and affection ; I have not so much faith in them, and would not forgive myself, should I offer more than I intend, which is very different from the present practice ; for there never was so abject and servile prostitutions of tenders of life, soul, devotion, adoration, vassal, slave, and I cannot tell what, as now ; when such expressions are so commonly and so indifferently bandied to and fro by every one, and to every one, that when they would profess a stronger and more respectful inclination they have not wherewithal to express it. I mortally hate all air of flattery, whence I naturally fall into a dry, rough, and crude way of speaking, which, to such as do not know me, may savour a little of disdain : I honour those most to whom I pay the least ; and when my soul is cheerful, I forget all ceremony. Methinks they should read it in my heart, and that my expression injures my conception. To bid welcome, take leave, give thanks, salute, offer my service, and such verbal formalities, as the ceremonious laws of

our civility enjoin, I know no man so stupidly unprovided of language as myself: and have never been employed in writing letters of favour, and recommendation, but he for whom I wrote thought them cold and flat. The Italians are great printers of letters. I do believe I have a hundred volumes of them; of all of which, those of Hannibal Caro seem to me to be the best. If all the paper I have formerly stained to the ladies, when my hand was really prompted by love, was now in being, there might perhaps be found a page worthy to be communicated to our young inamoratos, who are intoxicated with that passion.

His unfitness to write letters of recommendation.

I always write my letters in post haste, so that though mine is an intolerable bad hand, I rather choose to write myself, than to employ another; for I can find none able to write fast enough for my dictating, and I never transcribe any. I have accustomed the great ones that know me to put up with my blots and dashes, and upon paper without fold or margin. Those letters that cost me the most pains, are the worst; when I drag the matter in, it is a sign that I am not there. I fall to without premeditation or design; the first paragraph begets the second, and so on. The letters of this age consist more in margin, and prefaces, than matter; I had rather write two letters, than close and fold up one, and always assign that employment to some other; so also, when the business is dispatched, I would, with all my heart, commission another hand, to add those long harangues, offers, and prayers that we place at the bottom, and would be glad that some new custom discharged us of that unnecessary trouble; as also that of superscribing them with a train of qualities, and titles, which, for fear of mistakes, I have often omitted writing, and especially to men of the law and the revenue. So many are the innovations of offices, and so hard it is to place so many titles of honour in their proper and due order, which being dearly bought, they cannot be

The hurry in which Montaigne wrote.



changed, nor omitted without offence. I find the same fault likewise in charging the title-pages and inscriptions of the books we commit to the press, with such a clutter of titles.

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## CHAPTER XL.

*That the Relish of Good and Evil depends, in a great Measure, upon the Opinion we have of either.*

The basis of  
our opini-  
on of good  
and evil.

**MEN** (says an ancient Greek sentence) are tormented with the opinions they have of things, and not by the things themselves. It were a great point carried for the relief of our miserable human condition, could the truth of this proposition be established. For if evils have no admission into us but by the judgment we ourselves make of them, it should seem that it is in our own power to despise them, or to turn them to good. If things surrender to our mercy, why do we not manage and accommodate them to our advantage? If what we call evil and torment is neither evil nor torment of itself, but only our fancy gives it that quality, and makes it so, it is in our power to change it; and it being in our own choice, if there be no constraint upon us, we are strange fools, to take part with that side which is most disgusting to us, and to give sickness, want, and contempt, a sour nauseous taste, if it be in our power to give them a more grateful relish, and if fortune simply provide the matter it is for us to give it the form.

What evil  
is, and how  
it concerns  
us.

Now that what we call evil is not so of itself, or at least, be it what it will, that it depends upon us to give it another taste or complexion (which amounts to the same thing), let us examine how this can be maintained. If the original being of those things we fear could lodge itself in us, by its own authority, it

would lodge in a like manner in all ; for men are universally of the same nature, and, saving in greater or less proportions, are all provided with the same tools and instruments to conceive and to judge ; but the diversity of opinions we have of those things, shows clearly that they only enter us by composition : one person, perhaps, admits them in their true state ; but a thousand others give them a new and contrary being in their breast.

We hold death, poverty, and pain, for our principal enemies ; but this death, which some repute the most dreadful of all dreadful things, who knows not that others call it the only secure harbour from the tempests of life ? the sovereign good of nature ? the sole support of our liberty, and the common and ready remedy of all evils ? And as the one expects it with fear and trembling, the other supports it with greater ease than life. That blade complains of its facility :

*Mors utinam pavidos vitâ subducere nolles,  
Sed virtus te sola daret.\**

O death ! I wish thou wouldst the coward spare,  
That of thy gifts the brave alone might share.

But let us leave this boasted courage. Theodorus answered Lysimachus, who threatened to kill him, " Thou wilt do a brave feat," said he, " to show " thou hast the force of a cantharides."\* The greatest part of philosophers are observed to have either purposely prevented, or hastened and assisted their own death. How many common people do we see led to execution, and to a death mixed also with shame, and sometimes with grievous torments, appear with such assurance, what through obstinacy or natural simplicity, that a man can discover no change from their ordinary state of mind ; settling their domestic affairs, recommending themselves to their friends, singing, preaching, and entertaining the peo-

\* Luc. lib. iv. ver. 58, 531.

† Cic. Tusc. Quæst. lib. v. cap. 40.

ple so much, as sometimes to sally into jests, and to drink to their companions, as did Socrates!

Merry  
jokes of  
some per-  
sons led to  
execution.

One, who was leading to the gallows, told them they must not carry him through such a street, lest a merchant, that lived there, should arrest him by the way for an old debt. Another said to the hangman, he must not touch his neck, for fear of making him laugh outright, he was so ticklish. Another answered his confessor, who promised him that he should that day sup with our Lord, Do you go then, said he, in my room; for I, for my part, keep fast to-day. Another, having called for drink, and the hangman having drank first, said he would not drink after him, for fear of catching the pox. Every body has heard the tale of the Picard, to whom, being upon the ladder, they presented a whore, telling him (as our law sometimes permits) that if he would marry her, they would save his life; he having a while viewed her, and perceiving that she halted; "Come, tie up, tie up," said he, "she limps." And they tell, also, of a fellow in Denmark, who, being condemned to lose his head, and the like condition being proposed to him upon the scaffold, refused it, by reason the maid they offered him had hollow cheeks, and too sharp a nose. A servant at Thoulouse, being accused of heresy, said only, that he believed as his master did, who was a young student, prisoner with him, and he chose rather to die than suffer himself to be persuaded that his master could err. We read, that when Lewis XI. took Arras, a great many of the inhabitants suffered themselves to be hanged, rather than say, God save the king.

Buffoons  
that died  
with a joke  
in their  
mouths.

And amongst that mean-souled race of men, the buffoons, there have been some, who would not leave their fooling at the very moment of death. One, whom the hangman turned off the ladder; cried, "Launch the galley!" an ordinary saying of his. Another, who was laid upon a bed of straw, by a fire in which he was to be burnt, being asked by the phy-

sician where his pain lay, "Between the bench and the fire," said he; and the priest, to give him the extreme unction, groping for his feet, which pain had made him draw up, "You will find them," said he, "at the end of my legs." To one that exhorted him to recommend himself to God, "Who is going to him?" said he: and the other replying, "It will presently be yourself, if it be his good pleasure." "Would I were sure to be there to-morrow night," said he; "Do but recommend yourself to him," said the other, "and you will soon be there." "I had best then," added he, "to carry my recommendations myself."

In the kingdom of Narsingua, to this day, the wives of their priests are buried alive with the bodies of their husbands. All other wives are burnt at their husbands' funerals, which also they not only constantly but cheerfully undergo.\* At the death of their king, his wives and concubines, his favourites, all his officers, and domestic servants, which make up a great number of people, present themselves so cheerfully to the fire, where his body is burnt, that they seem to take it for a great honour to accompany their master in death.

During our late war of Milan, where there happened so many takings and retakings of towns, the people, impatient of so many various changes of fortune, took such a resolution to die, that I have heard my father say, he there saw a list taken of twenty-five masters of families, that made away with themselves in one week's time: an accident somewhat resembling that of the Xanthians, who, being besieged by Brutus, contracted, men, women, and

Women that bury or burn themselves alive with the dead bodies of their husbands.

Death fondly coveted.

\* In the Indies, says Cicero, where it is the custom for a man to have several wives, when the husband dies, the women dispute who was his greatest favourite; and she who carries the question, is overjoyed, and burnt on the same pile with her husband. Tusc. Quæst. lib. v. cap. 27. The same custom was observed by a people of Thrace, according to Herodotus, lib. v. p. 331, and is still kept up in Indostan.

children, such a furious desire of dying, that nothing can be done to escape death, which they did not put in practice to avoid life; insomuch, that Brutus had much ado to save but a very small number.\*

Opinions  
espoused at  
the expense  
of life.

Every opinion is of force enough to make itself to be espoused at the expense of life. The first article of that valiant oath, which Greece took and observed in the Median war, was, that every one should sooner exchange life for death, than their own laws for those of Persia. What a world of people do we see, in the wars between the Turks and the Greeks, rather embrace a cruel death than renounce circumcision for baptism? An example of which no sort of religion is incapable.

Jews cruel-  
ly treated  
by the Por-  
tuguese to  
make them  
change  
their re-  
ligion.

The kings of Castile having banished the Jews out of their dominions, John, king of Portugal, in consideration of eight crowns a-head, afforded them an asylum in his, for a limited time; upon condition that when it expired they should depart; and he was to furnish them with shipping to transport them to Africa. The day being elapsed, they were given to understand, that such as did not obey should remain slaves; the vessels were very slenderly provided, and those who embarked in them were rudely and villainously used by the seamen, who, besides other indignities, kept them cruising upon the sea, forwards and backwards, till they had spent all their provisions, and were constrained to buy of them at so dear a rate, and for so long a time, that they set them not on shore till they were all stripped to their very shirts. The news of this inhuman usage being brought to those who remained behind, the greater part of them resolved upon slavery, and some made a show of changing their religion. Emanuel, the successor of John, being come to the crown, first set them at liberty; but afterwards, altering his mind, ordered them to quit his country, assigning three ports for

\* Fifty only, who were saved against their will. Plutarch, in the Life of Marcus Brutus, chap. 8.

their passage. He hoped (says the bishop of Oso-  
rius, no contemptible Latin historian of our times)  
that though the favour of the liberty he had restored  
to them, failed of converting them to Christianity,  
yet their aversion to expose themselves to the mercy  
of the mariners, to abandon a country they were now  
habituated to, and grown very rich in, and to ex-  
pose themselves in strange and unknown regions,  
would certainly produce the desired effect; but find-  
ing himself deceived in his expectation, and that  
they were all resolved upon the voyage, he cut off  
two of the ports he had promised them, to the end  
that the length and troublesomeness of the passage,  
might reduce some: or that he might have an oppor-  
tunity, by crowding them into one place, the more  
conveniently to execute what he had designed;\*  
which was to force all the children, under fourteen  
years of age, from the arms of their parents, to  
transport them from their sight and conversation, to  
a place where they might be instructed in our  
religion.

He says, that this produced a horrid spectacle; Jews that, out of zeal for their religion, killed themselves and children.  
the natural affection between the parents and their  
children, and moreover their zeal for their ancient  
belief, contending against this violent decree, fathers  
and mothers were commonly seen making away with

\* Mariana, the celebrated Jesuit, says, in his History of Spain, printed at Mentz (tom. II. lib. xxvi. cap. 13), that by an edict of this prince, those children were baptised by force; a cruel edict, says the good Jesuit, altogether contrary to the Christian laws and institutes. What, he adds, shall violence be used to force men to embrace Christianity, and in the most important affair of the world, to rob those whom God has been pleased to leave to their own discretion, of that heavenly present, Liberty! to proceed so far is a horrible crime, as well as to force children with this view from the arms of their parents. The Portuguese nation, however, committed sin in these two points, having dragged the children to baptism by force, and without the consent of their parents, and having engaged those more advanced in years to make profession of Christianity by loading them with reproaches and injuries, and especially by fraudulently depriving them of the means of retiring elsewhere, which they had expressly obliged themselves to grant them.

themselves; and what was yet worse, precipitating their young children, out of love and compassion, into wells, to avoid the severity of this law. As to the remainder of them, the time that had been fixed being expired, for want of means to transport them, they returned into slavery. Some turned Christians, upon whose faith, or that of their posterity, even to this day, which is a hundred years since, few Portuguese rely, or believe them to be real converts; though custom, and length of time, are much more powerful counsellors for such changes, than all constraints whatever.

Albigenses  
heretics  
chose ra-  
ther to be  
burnt than  
recant their  
opinions.

In the town of Castlenau-Darry, fifty heretics, Albigenses, courageously suffered themselves to be burnt alive in one fire, rather than renounce their opinions. *Quoties non modo ductores nostri, dicit Cicero, sed universi etiam exercitus, ad non dubiam mortem, concurrerunt?* "How often have not only our leaders, but whole armies, run to certain death?"

Death  
eagerly co-  
rected.

I have seen an intimate friend of mine run eagerly upon death, with a real affection that was rooted in his heart by divers plausible arguments, which I could not dispossess him of, who, upon the first occasion that he could do it with an appearance of honour, rushed into it without any visible reason, with an obstinate and ardent desire of dying. We have several examples, in our own times, of persons, even children, who, for fear of some little chastisement, have dispatched themselves. And what shall we not fear (says one of the ancients to this purpose), if we dread that which cowardice itself has chosen for its refuge? Should I here produce a long list of those of all sexes and conditions, and of all sects, even in the most happy ages, who have either with great constancy looked death in the face, or voluntarily sought it; and sought it not only to avoid the evils of this life, but some purely to avoid the satiety of living, and others for the hope of a better condition elsewhere, I should never have done. Nay,

the number is so infinite, that, in truth, I should with more ease reckon up those who have feared it. This one therefore shall serve for all: Pyrrho, the philosopher, being one day in a boat, in a very great tempest, singled out those he saw the most affrighted about him, and encouraged them by the example of a hog, that was there, nothing at all concerned at the storm.\*

Shall we then dare to say, that this advantage of reason, of which we so much boast, and upon the account of which we think ourselves masters and emperors over all other creatures, was given us for our torment? To what end serves the knowledge of things, if it renders us more unmanly? If we lose the tranquillity and repose we should enjoy without it, and if it put us into a worse condition than Pyrrho's hog; shall we employ the understanding that was conferred upon us for our greatest good to our own ruin, setting ourselves against the design of nature, and the universal order of things, which require that every one should make use of the faculties and means he has, to his own advantage? Your rule is true enough, says one, as to what concerns death; but what will you say of necessity? What will you moreover say of pain, which Aristippus, Hierónymus, and almost all the wise men, have reputed the worst of evils? And those who have denied it by word of mouth, have, however, confessed it in actions. Possidonius being extremely tormented with a sharp and painful disease, Pompey came to visit him, excusing himself that he had taken so unseasonable a time to come to hear him discourse of philosophy: God forbid,† said Possidonius to him, that pain should ever have the power to hinder me from talking, and thereupon fell immediately upon this same topic, the contempt of pain; but, in the mean time, his own infirmity was playing its part, and

\* Diog. Laert. in the Life of Pyrrho, lib. ix. sect. 63.

† Cic. Tusc. Quæst. lib. iv. cap. 25.



plagued him incessantly; on which he cried out, Thou mayest do thy worst, pain;\* but thou shalt never make me say, that thou art an evil. This story, about which they make such a clutter, what is there in it, I fain would know, to the contempt of pain? It only fights it with words, and in the mean time, if the shootings he felt did not move him, why did he interrupt his discourse? Why did he fancy he did so great a thing, in forbearing to confess it an evil? All does not here consist in the imagination; our fancies may work upon other things; but this is an object of which our senses themselves are judges:

*Qui nisi sunt veri, ratio quoque falsa sit omnis.†*

Which if not true, ev'n reason must be false.

Shall we persuade our skins, that the lashes of a whip tickle us; or our taste, that a portion of aloes is Graves wine. Pyrrho's hog is here in the same case with us; he is not afraid of death, it is true, but if you beat him, he will cry out to some purpose: shall we counteract the general law of nature, which, in every living creature under heaven, is seen to tremble under pain? The very trees seem to groan under injuries. Death is only felt by reason, forasmuch as it is the motion of an instant:

*Aut fuit, aut veniet, nihil est præsentis in illa,  
Morsque minus pænæ, quam mora mortis habet.‡*

Still past or future, here no present tense

Submits the fleeting object to our sense;

Death cuts so quick the thread of life in twain,

The thought is far more dreadful than the pain.

A thousand beasts, a thousand men, are sooner dead than threatened. That also which we principally pretend to fear in death is pain, the ordinary fore-

\* Cic. Tusc. Quæst. lib. iv. cap. 25.

† Lucret. lib. iv. ver. 487.

‡ The first verse of this distich is taken from a satirical composition which Montaigne's friend, Stephen de la Boetius, addressed to him, and of which I quoted the beginning in ch. 27, Of Friendship. The second is from Ovid's epistle, Ariadne to Theseus, ver. 84.

runner of it; yet, if we may believe a holy father,\* *Malam mortem non facit, nisi quod sequitur mortem*: “Nothing makes death evil, but what follows it.” And I should yet say, more probably, that neither that which goes before, nor that which follows after, is an appurtenance of death: we accuse ourselves falsely. I find by experience, that it is rather the uneasiness of the imagination of death, that makes us impatient of pain; and that we find it doubly grievous as it threatens us with death. But reason accusing our cowardice for fearing a thing so sudden, so inevitable, and so insensible, we admit this other as the more excusable pretence. All ills that carry no other danger along with them, but simply the evils themselves, we treat as things of no danger. The tooth-ach, or the gout, however painful, yet not being reputed mortal, who reckons them in the catalogue of diseases?

But let us suppose, that in death we principally regard the pain; as also, there is nothing to be feared in poverty, but that it throws us into its arms by thirst, hunger, cold, heat, watching, &c. which it makes us suffer, and consequently we have nothing to do with pain. I will grant, and very willingly, that it is the worst accident of our being: for I am that man who the most hates and avoids it, considering that, hitherto, I thank God, I have had so little share of it; but it is in our power, if not to annihilate, at least to lessen it by patience, and though the body should mutiny to maintain the soul and reason, nevertheless, in a good temper. Were it not so, who had ever given reputation to virtue, valour, strength, magnanimity, and resolution? wherein were their parts to be played, if there were no pain to be defied? *Avida est periculi virtus*:† “Valour is greedy of danger.” Were there no lying upon the hard ground, no enduring, armed at all points, the noon-day heats, no feeding upon the flesh of horses

Pain the worst accident of our being, how it may be mitigated.

\* August. de Civitate Dei, lib. i. cap. 11.

† Seneca.

and asses, no seeing a man's self hacked to pieces, no suffering a bullet to be pulled out from amongst the bones, nor the stitching up, cauterising, and searching of wounds, by what means were the advantage we covet to have over the vulgar to be acquired? It is far from flying evil and pain, what the sages say, that, of actions equally good, a man should most wish to perform that wherein there is great labour. *Non est enim hilaritate, nec lascivia, nec risu, aut joco comite levitatis, sed saepe etiam tristes firmitate, et constantia sunt beati.\** "Men are not happy by mirth and wantonness, nor by laughter or jesting, the companion of levity; but the graver sort are often so from their steadiness and constancy." And for this reason, it has ever been impossible to persuade our fore-fathers, that the victories obtained by dint of force, and the hazard of war, were not more honourable than those performed in great security, by wiles and stratagems :

*Lætius est, quoties magno sibi constat honestum.†*

Splendid achievements more august appear,  
By how much more they cost the deer dear.

Besides, this ought to be our comfort, that naturally, if the pain be violent, it is of short duration; and if long, it is moderate, *Si gravis, brevis; si longus, levis.‡* Thou wilt not feel it long, if thou feelest it too much; it will soon either put an end to itself, or to thee: if thou can'st not support it, it will export thee. *Memineris maximos morte finire; parcos multa habere intervalla requietis: Mediocrum nos esse dominos: ut si tolerabiles sint, feramus; si minus, è vita, quam ea non placeat tanquam è theatro exeamus.§* "Remember, that great pains are terminated by death, small ones have many intermissions of repose, and that we are masters of the moderate sort: so that, if tolerable, we may bear

\* Cicero de Finib. lib. ii. cap. 20.

† Luc. lib. ix. ver. 404.

‡ Cicero de Finib. lib. ii. cap. 29. § Cicero de Finib. lib. i. cap. 15.

“ them ; if not, we can go out of life as from a  
“ theatre, where the entertainment does not please  
“ us.” That which renders us so impatient of pain,  
is the not being accustomed to place our chief contentment in the mind, the sole and sovereign mistress of our condition. The body, saving in greater or less proportion, has but one and the same course and bias ; whereas the soul is extremely variable, and subjects to herself, and to her own condition, be it what it will, the sensations of the body, and all other accidents. We ought, therefore, to study her, to inquire into her strength, and to rouse up her most powerful faculties. There is no reason, prescription, nor force, that can prevail against her inclination and choice. Of so many thousands of biasses that she has at her disposal, let us give her one proper to our repose and preservation ; and then we shall not only be sheltered from all manner of offence, but, moreover, gratified and obliged, if we like it, with evils and injuries. She makes her profit indifferently of all things. Errors and dreams serve her to good use, as a lawful matter to lodge us in safety and contentment. It is plain enough that the state of our mind is what gives the edge to our pains and pleasures. Beasts, that have no soul, leave to their own bodies their own free and natural sensations, which, consequently, are in every kind nearly the same, as appears by the similitude of their motions. If we did not disturb, in our members, the jurisdiction that appertains to them in this respect, it would probably be the better for us. Nature has given them a just and moderate temper, both to pleasure and pain ; neither can it fail of being just, as it is equal and common. But since we have renounced the rules of nature, to give ourselves up to the rambling liberty of our own fancies, let us at least help to bend them to the most agreeable side. Plato fears our too vehement engagement in pain and pleasure, forasmuch as it too much binds and knits the soul to the body ; whereas I am of a quite contrary opinion, and think

that it separates and disunites them. As an enemy is made more eager by our flight, so pain grows fiercest when we tremble under it. It will surrender upon much better terms to them who make head against it; a man must oppose and stoutly set himself against it. In retiring and giving ground, we invite and draw upon ourselves the ruin that threatens us. As the body is more firm in an encounter, the more stiffly it sets itself to it; so is it with the soul. But let us come to examples, which are the proper commodity for fellows of such feeble reins as myself; where we shall find, that it is with pain, as with stones, which receive a more sprightly or a fainter lustre, according to the foil they are set in, and that it has no more room in us than we are pleased to allow it. *Tantum doluerunt, quantum doloribus se inseruerunt* :\* “So far as they gave way to pain, so far it took advantage of them.” We are more sensible of one little prick of a surgeon’s lancet, than of twenty wounds with a sword in the heat of battle.

The pairs  
of child-  
bearing  
supported  
with ease.

As for the pain of child-bearing, said by the physicians, and by God himself, to be great, and which we make so great a clutter about, there are whole nations that make nothing of it. To say nothing of the Lacedæmonian women, what alteration can you see in the wives of our Swiss foot-soldiers, except that when they trot after their husbands, you see them to-day with the child hanging at their backs, that they carried yesterday in their bellies? and the gipsies wash their brats so soon as they come into the world, in the first river they meet.

Remark-  
able in-  
stance to  
this pur-  
pose of a  
Roman  
lady.

Besides the many whores who daily steal their children out of their womb, as before they stole them in,—that fair and noble wife of Sabinus, a patrician of Rome,† for another person’s sake, without

\* Aug. de Civit. Dei.

† A very curious history is this, which you will find at large in Plutarch’s Treatise of Love, ch. 34.

help, without crying out, or so much as a groan, bore the delivery of twins.

A poor simple boy of Lacedæmon having stole a fox (for they more fear the shame of their folly in stealing, than we do the punishment of our knavery), and having got him under his coat,\* rather suffered it to tear out his bowels than he would discover his theft. Another, offering incense at sacrifice, suffered himself to be burnt to the bone, by a coal that fell in his sleeve, rather than disturb the ceremony. And there have been a great number, who, only for a trial of their virtue, according to their institutions, have, at seven years old, endured to be whipped to death, without changing their countenance. Cicero has seen them fight in parties, with fists, feet, and teeth, till they fainted and sunk down rather than confess themselves overcome. Custom would never conquer nature, for she is ever invincible, but we have poisoned the mind with shadow, delights, wantonness, negligence, and sloth;† and with vain opinions, and corrupt manners, render it effeminate, mean.

Every one knows the story of Scævola, that having slipped into the enemy's camp to kill their general, and missed his blow, in order to repair his fault, and deliver his country, he not only confessed his design to Porsenna, the king, whom he had purposed to kill; but added, "That there were then in his camp a great number of Romans, his accomplices in the enterprise, as good men as he;" and, to show his fortitude, causing a pan of burning coals to be brought, he suffered his arm to broil upon them, till the king, conceiving horror at the sight, commanded the fire-pan to be taken away. What would you say of him, that would not suspend reading in a book whilst he was under an incision?‡ and of another that persisted to mock and laugh, in contempt

\* Plutarch, in the Life of Lycurgus, cap. 14.

† Cic. Tusc. Quest. lib. v. cap. 17.

‡ Senec. ep. 78.

of the pains inflicted upon him ; \* so that the enraged cruelty of his executioners, and all the inventions of tortures redoubled upon him, one after another, were spent in vain ? but he was a philosopher. What would you say of one of Cæsar's gladiators, who laughed all the while that his wounds were probed and laid open ? *Quis mediocris gladiator ingemuit ? Quis vultum mutavit unquam ? Quis non modo stetit, verum etiam decubuit turpiter ? Quis cum decubisset, ferrum recipere jussus, collem contraxit ?* †  
 “ What mean fencer ever so much as gave a groan ?  
 “ which of them ever so much as changed his countenance ? which of them, standing or falling, did  
 “ either with shame ? which of them, when he was  
 “ down, and commanded to receive the stroke of  
 “ the sword, ever shrunk in his neck ? ” Let us mention the women too. Who has not heard at Paris of her that caused her face to be fleaed, only for the fresher complexion of a new skin ? There are some who have drawn good and sound teeth, for the sake of lisping with delicacy, or to set them in better order. How many examples of the contempt of pain have we in that sex ? what can they not do ? what do they fear to do, for ever so little hopes of an addition to their beauty ?

*Vellere queis cura est albos à stirpe capillos,  
 Et faciem dempta pelle referre novam.* ‡

Who, by the roots, pluck their grey hairs, and try  
 With a new skin an old face to supply.

I have seen some of them swallow sand, ashes, and do their utmost to spoil their stomachs, to get pale complexions. To get a slender waist, what racks will they not endure of girding and cramping their

\* If I am not mistaken Anaxarchus is meant, whom Nicocreon, tyrant of Cyprus, caused to be torn to pieces without being able to conquer his constancy. Diog. Laert. in the Life of Anaxarchus, lib. ix. sect. 58, 59.

† Cic. Tusc. Quæst. lib. ii. cap. 17.

‡ Tib. lib. i. eleg. 9, ver. 45, 46.

sides with stiff bodice,\* till they have notches in their ribs, that sometimes are indented into the quick flesh, and prove mortal? It is an ordinary thing with several nations, at this day, to wound themselves in good earnest, to gain credit to what they declare. Of which our king relates notable examples of what he has seen in Poland, and what was done in respect to himself.† But besides what I know to have been done of this kind by some in France, when I came from that famous assembly of the estates at Blois, I had a little before seen a maid in Picardy, who, to manifest the ardour of her promises, as also her constancy, gave herself, with a bodkin she wore in her hair, four or five stabs into the arm, till the blood gushed out. The Turks scarify themselves much in honour of their mistresses, and to the end that the scar may the longer remain, they presently clap fire to the wound, where they hold it an incredible time to stop the blood, and form the mark; people that have been eye-witnesses of the fact, have both written of this to me, and sworn to the truth of it. Yea, for ten aspers, there are fellows to be found every day, that will give themselves a good deep slash in the arm or thighs. I am willing, however, to have the testimonies nearest to us, when we have most need of them; for Christendom furnishes us with enough. After the example of our blessed Guide,

\* These bodice, being pressed very tight to the sides by girdles, rendered the flesh there benumbed as it were, and as hard as the horny or callous part of the hands of certain labourers. The ladies, who exposed themselves to this racking torture, when it was the fashion, laughed at their own folly afterwards, though it is not unlikely that they would be all as ready to make another sacrifice of their ease to their shape, was the fashion to be revived,

† M. de Thou says expressly, that when this prince came away privately from Poland, the great chamberlain of the kingdom, who followed, and with much ado overtook him on the frontier of Austria, having in vain persuaded him to return back to Poland, quitted him at last, after having promised inviolable fidelity to him, by piercing his arm with a dagger, and then sucking the blood, to the great astonishment of the king, to whom he meant thereby to testify his devotion. Thou's Hist. lib. lviij. at the year 1574.



there have been many who in devotion bear the cross. We are informed, upon good authority, that the king St. Lewis\* wore a hair-shirt, till, in his old age, his confessor gave him a dispensation to leave it off; and that every Friday he caused his shoulders to be drubbed by his priest, with five small chains of iron, which were always carried about amongst his night accoutrements for that purpose. William, our last duke of Guienne, the father of Eleanor, who transmitted this duchy into the families of France and England, continually, for ten or twelve years before he died, wore a suit of armour under a religious habit, by way of penance. Fulk, count of Anjou, went as far as Jerusalem, there to cause himself to be whipped by two of his servants, with a rope about his neck, before the sepulchre of our Lord; nay, do we not, moreover, every Good-Friday, in several places, see great numbers of men and women beat and whip themselves till they lacerate and cut the flesh to the very bones? I have often seen this, and without enchantment. And they say (for they go disguised), that some for money undertook, by this means, to vouch for the religion of others, by a contempt of pain, so much the greater, as the incentives of devotion are more powerful than those of avarice. Q. Maximus buried his son,† when he was consul; M. Cato his, when prætor elect; and L. Paulus both his, within a few days one after another, with a composed countenance which expressed no manner of grief. I said once of a certain person, by way of jest, that he had disappointed the divine justice: for an account of the violent death of three children of his, grown up, being sent him in one day, for a severe scourge, as it is to be supposed, he almost took it for a particular grace and favour of heaven. I do not follow these monstrous humours, though I lost two or three at nurse, if not without regret, at

\* Vainville's Memoirs, tom. ii. 54, 55.

† Cic. Tusc. Quæst. lib. iii. cap. 28.

least without repining; and yet there is hardly an accident that pierces men more to the quick. I see a great many other occasions of sorrow that, should they happen to me, I would hardly feel; and have despised some when they have befallen me, to which the world has given so terrible a figure, that I should blush to boast of my constancy. *Ex quo intelligitur, non in natura, sed in opinione esse ægritudinem.\** “By which it is understood, that the grievance is “not in nature, but opinion.” Opinion is a powerful party, bold, and immoderate. Did ever any so earnestly hunt after security and repose, as Alexander and Cæsar did after disturbances and difficulties? Terez, the father of Sitalces, king of Thrace,† was wont to say, that when he had no wars, he fancied there was no difference between him and his groom.‡ Cato, the consul, to secure some cities of Spain from revolt, only interdicting the inhabitants of them from wearing arms, a great many killed themselves: *Ferox gens, nullam vitam rati sine armis esse*:§ “A fierce “people, who thought there was no life without a “war.” How many do we know, who have forsaken the calms and sweetness of a quiet life at home, amongst their acquaintance, to seek out the horror of uninhabitable deserts; and having precipitated themselves into so abject a condition, as to become the scorn and contempt of the world, have hugged themselves with the conceit, even to affection?

Cardinal Borromeo, who died lately at Milan, in the midst of all the jollity that the air of Italy, his youth, noble birth, and great riches invited him to, lived in so austere a manner, that the same robe he wore in summer served him for winter too; his bed was only straw, and the hours of vacancy from his

Austere life  
of Cardinal  
Borromeo.

\* Cic. Tusc. Quæst. lib. iii. cap. 28.

† Diod. Sicul. lib. xii. cap. 15.

‡ Plutarch, in the Notable Sayings of the ancient Kings, Princes, and Generals.

§ Tit. Liv. lib. xxxiv. cap. 17.

functions, he continually spent in study, upon his knees, having a little bread and water set by his book, which was his whole repast, and all the time he spent in eating.

Fatal accidents supported by some persons without grief.

I know some who, for profit and advancement, have consented to cuckoldom, of which the bare name only affrights so many people. If the sight be not the most necessary of all our senses, it is at least the most pleasant: but the most pleasant and most useful of all our members, seem to be those of generation, and yet a great many have conceived a mortal hatred against them, merely for their being too amiable: and have deprived themselves of them, only for the sake of their value. As much thought he of his eyes, who put them out. The generality, and more solid sort of men, think it a great blessing to have many children; I, and some others, think it as happy to be without them. And when Thales was asked why he did not marry, he answered, "became" "he had no mind to leave any issue behind him."\* That our opinion gives the value to things, is very manifest in a great many of these which we do not so much regard for themselves, as on our own account, and never consider, either their virtues, or their use; but only how dear they cost us: as though that were a part of their substance: and we only repute for value in them, not what they bring to us, but what we add to them. By which I understand, that we are managers of our expense. As it weighs, it serves for so much as it weighs; our opinion will never suffer it to want of its value. The price gives value to the diamond, difficulty to virtue, suffering to devotion, and griping to physic. A certain person, to be poor, threw his crowns into the same sea, to which so many came from all parts of the world to fish for riches.

\* Diog. Laertius, in the Life of Thales, lib. i. sect 26. Thales's answer admits of two very different constructions, according to the different readings of this passage. Whether Montaigne's be right or wrong is not my business to determine here.

Epicurus says,\* that to be rich is no relief from, <sup>Avarice,</sup> but only an alteration of, misery. In plain truth, it <sup>what it</sup> is no want, but rather abundance, that creates a- <sup>springs</sup> <sup>from.</sup> rice. Neither will I stick to deliver my own experience concerning this affair. I have since my childhood lived in three sorts of conditions; the first, which continued near twenty years, I passed over without any other means, but what were accidental, and depending upon the allowance and assistance of others, without stint or certain revenue. I then spent my money so much the more cheerfully, and with so much the less care how it went, as it wholly depended upon my over-confidence of fortune. I never lived more at my ease, I never found the purse of any of my friends shut against me, having laid down to myself this rule, by no means to fail of payment at the appointed time, which also they have a thousand times respited, seeing how careful I was to satisfy them; so that I practised at once a thrifty, and withal a kind of alluring honesty. I naturally felt a kind of pleasure in paying, as if I eased my shoulders of a troublesome weight, and from an image of slavery; besides that I felt a ravishing kind of satisfaction, by doing a just action, and pleasing another. I except those payments, where the trouble of reckoning and bargaining are required; for if I can meet with nobody to ease me of that burden, I avoid them, how scandalously and injuriously soever, all I possibly can, for fear of those little wrangling disputes, with which both my humour and way of speaking are totally incompatible. There is nothing I hate so much as driving a bargain; it is a mere traffic of cozenage and impudence; where, after an hour's debate and haggling, both parties abandon their words and oaths, for five sols profit or abatement. And yet I borrowed at great disadvantage; for, wanting the confidence to speak to the person myself, I ventured my request on paper, which makes

\* Seneca, ep. 17.

but a weak if any effort, is a very unsuccessful advocate, and is of very great advantage to him who has a mind to deny. I, in those days, more freely referred the conduct of my affairs to the stars than I have since done to my own forecast and sense. Most good husbands look upon it as a horrible thing to live always thus in uncertainty, and do not consider, in the first place, that the greatest part of the world live so. How many worthy men have wholly abandoned a certainty of their own, and do so daily, to court the inconstant favour of princes, and fortune? Cæsar ran above a million of gold more than he was worth in debt, to become Cæsar. And how many merchants begin their traffic by the sale of their farms, which they send to the Indies,

*Tot per impotentia freta ?\**

Over so many stormy seas.

In so great a drought of devotion, as we see in these days, we have a thousand and a thousand colleges that pass it over commodiously, expecting every day their dinner from the liberality of heaven. Secondly, they do not take notice, that this certitude, upon which they so much rely, is not much less uncertain and hazardous than hazard itself. I see misery beyond two thousand crowns a-year, as near as if it stood close by me ; for besides that it is in the power of chance to make a hundred breaches to poverty, through our riches (there being very often no mean between the highest and the lowest fortune) :

*Fortuna vitrea est : tum, quam splendet, frangitur.†*

Fortune is glass, the brighter it doth shine,  
More frail : and apt to break 'tis, when most fine.

To turn all our fences and bulwarks topsy turvy, I find that, by divers causes, indigence is as frequently seen to inhabit with those who have estates, as with those that have none ; and perhaps it is not quite so

\* Cat. epig. iv. ver. 18. † Publius Syrius, upon fortune Ex Munia.

grievous when alone, as when accompanied with riches, which flow more from good management than income. *Faber est suæ quisque fortunæ* :\* “ Every one is the maker of his own fortune ;” and an uneasy, necessitous, busy, rich man, seems to me more miserable, than he that is simply poor. *In divitiis inopes, quod genus egestatis gravissimum est* :† “ Poor in the midst of riches, which is the worst kind of poverty.” The greatest and most wealthy princes are, by poverty and scarcity, driven commonly to extreme necessity ; for can there be any more extreme, than to become tyrants, and unjust usurpers of their subjects’ estates ? My second condition of life was, to have money of my own ; wherein I so ordered the matter, that I had soon laid up a very notable sum, according to my fortune ; not considering with myself, that that was to be reputed having, which a man reserved from his ordinary expense, nor that a man could rely upon the hopes of a revenue to receive, how clear soever his estate might be. “ For what,” said I, “ if I should be surprised by such or such an accident ; and, after the like vain and vicious imaginations, would very learnedly, by this hoarding of money, provide against all inconvenience ; and could moreover answer such as objected to me, that the number of them was too infinite, that though I could not lay up for all, I could, however, do it at least for some, and for many.” Yet was not this done without great solicitude and anxiety. I kept it very close, and as I dare speak boldly of myself, never talked of my money, but as others do, who, being rich, pretend to be poor, and being poor, pretend to be rich, dispensing with their consciences for ever telling sincerely what they have. A ridiculous and shameful prudence ! Was I to go a journey ? methought I

\* Sallust, in his first oration to Cæsar de Ordinanda Republicâ, sect. i.

† Seneca, ep. 74, at the beginning, where you will see that Montaigne has transposed Seneca’s words, to apply them to his subject.

never was enough provided: and the more I loaded myself with money, the more also was I loaded with fear, one while of the danger of the roads, another of the fidelity of him who had the charge of my sumpters, of whom, as some others that I know, I was never sufficiently secure, if I had him not always in my eye. If I chanced to leave the key of my cabinet behind me, what strange jealousies, and uneasy thoughts was I possessed with? and, which was worse, without daring to acquaint any body with the cause. My mind was eternally taken up in this manner; so that, all things considered, there is more trouble in keeping money than in getting it. And if I did not altogether as much as I say, yet it cost me something to restrain myself from doing it. I reaped little or no advantage from what I had, and my expenses seem nothing less to me, for having the more to spend: for, as Bion said,\* "The hairy men are as angry as the bald to be pulled;" and after you are once accustomed to it, and set your heart upon your heap, it is no more at your service, you dare not diminish it: it is a building that your fancy must of necessity tumble down, if you do but touch it. Necessity must first take you by the throat, before you can prevail upon yourself to lay a finger on it: and I would sooner have pawned any thing I had, or sold a house, and with much less reluctance or constraint upon myself, than have made the least breach in that beloved purse I had so carefully laid by. But the danger was, that a man cannot easily prescribe certain limits to this desire (for they are hard to find in things that a man conceives to be good), nor stint this good husbandry so, that it may not degenerate into avarice: men being still intent upon adding to the heap, and increasing the stock from sum to sum, till at last they vilely deprive themselves of the enjoyment of their own proper goods, and throw the whole into reserve, without

\* Seneca, in his Treatise of the Tranquillity of the Mind, cap. 8.

making any use of them at all. According to this rule, they are the richest people in the world, who are set to guard the gates and walls of a wealthy city. All moneyed men I conclude to be covetous. Plato places corporeal or human benefit in this order; health, beauty, strength, and wealth, the last of which, says he, "is not blind, but very clear-sighted, when illuminated by prudence." Dionysius, the son,\* acted with a good grace. He was informed, that one of his Syracusians had buried some treasure, and thereupon sent to the man to bring it to him, which he accordingly did, privately reserving a small part of it only to himself, with which he went to another city, where, having lost his appetite of hoarding, he began to live at a more liberal rate. Which Dionysius hearing, caused the rest of his treasure to be restored to him, saying, "that since he had learned how to use it, he very willingly returned it back to him."

I continued some years in this hoarding humour, when I know not what good demon fortunately put me out of it, as he did the Syracusian, and made me scatter abroad all that I had saved; the pleasure of a certain voyage I took, of very great expense, having made me spurn this love of money under foot, by which means I am now fallen into a third way of living (I speak what I think of it), doubtless much more pleasant and moderate, which is, that I spend to the height of my income; sometimes the one, sometimes the other may perhaps exceed, but it is very little that they differ at all; I live from hand to mouth, and content myself in having sufficient for my present and ordinary expense; for as to extraordinary occasions, all the laying up in the world would never suffice; and it is the greatest folly to expect that fortune should ever sufficiently arm us against herself. It is with our own weapons

*How Montaigne regulated his expenses.*

\* Or Dionysius the father, according to Plutarch, in the Notable Sayings of Kings, Princes, and Generals.



that we are to fight her; accidental ones will betray us when it comes to the pinch. If I lay up, it is not to buy lands, of which I have no need, but to purchase pleasure. *Non esse cupidum, pecunia est: non esse emacem vectigal est*.\* “Not to be covetous, “is wealth; not to be a purchaser, is a tribute.” I am in no fear of wanting, nor desire of augmenting; *Divitiarum fructus est in copia; copiam declarat satietas*:† “The fruits of riches lie in abundance, “and satiety declares abundance.” And I am particularly pleased with myself, that this reformation in me has fallen out at an age naturally inclined to avarice, and that I see myself cured of a folly so common to old men, and of all human follies the most ridiculous.

A fine instance of the contempt of riches.

Feraulez, a man that had run through fortunes, and found that the increase of substance was no increase of appetite, either with respect to eating, drinking, sleeping, or the enjoyment of his wife; and who, on the other side, felt the care of his economy lie heavy upon his shoulders, as it does on mine, was resolved to gratify‡ a poor young man, his faithful friend, who clamoured for riches, by making him a gift of all his wealth, which was excessively great (and which he was in the way of accumulating daily by the liberality of Cyrus, his good master, and by the war), conditionally, that he should take care to maintain him handsomely as his guest and friend; and they afterwards lived very happily together, equally content with the change of their condition.

Another instance to the same purpose.

This is an example that I could imitate with all my heart. And I very much approve the fortune of an ancient prelate, who absolutely stripped himself of his purse, his revenue, and care of his expense; committing them, one while to one trusty servant, and another while to another, that he has spun out a

\* Cic. Perad. vi. cap. 3.

† Ibid. cap. 2.

‡ See Xenophon, Cyropædia, lib. viii. cap. 3, sect. 16—20.

long track of years, as ignorant, by this means, of his domestic affairs as a stranger. A confidence in another man's virtue, is no light evidence of a man's own; therefore, God is pleased to favour such a confidence. As for him of whom I am speaking, I see no where a better governed family, or one that is more decently maintained than his; happy in having stated his affairs to so just a proportion, that his estate is sufficient to do it without his care or trouble, and without any hindrance, either in the spending or laying it up, to his other more agreeable and quiet employments.

Plenty then and poverty depend upon the opinion every one has of them; and riches, no more than glory or health, have more of either beauty or pleasure, than he by whom they are possessed is pleased to imagine in them. Every one is well or ill at ease, according as he finds himself: not he whom the world believes, but he who believes himself to be so, is content; and in this alone, belief gives itself being and reality. Fortune does neither good nor hurt; she only presents us the matter, and the seed, which our soul, more powerfully than she, turns and applies as she best pleases; being the sole cause and mistress of her own happy or unhappy condition. All external accessions receive taste and colour from the internal constitution, as clothes warm us, not with their heat, but our own, which they are fit to cover and nourish; and he that would cover a cold body, would do the same service for the cold, for thus snow and ice are preserved.\* In the same manner as study is a torment to a truant, abstinence from wine to a good fellow, frugality to the spendthrift, and exercise to a lazy, tender-bred fellow; so it is of all the rest. Things are not so painful and difficult of themselves, but our weakness

What renders a man contented or indigent.

\* It appears that Montaigne has taken all that follows, to the end of this paragraph, from a beautiful passage in Seneca's epistle 81.

or cowardice makes them so. To judge of great and high matters, requires a suitable soul; otherwise we attribute the vice to them, which is really our own. A strait oar seems crooked in the water: it is not only of importance that we see the thing, but in what manner we see it.

The notion  
of pain, on  
what it is  
founded.

Well then, why amongst so many discourses, that by so many arguments persuade men to despise death and endure pain, can we not find out one that makes for us? and of so many sorts of imaginations as have prevailed upon others, as to persuade them to do so, why does not every person apply some one to himself the most suitable to his own humour? If he cannot away with a strong working apozem to eradicate the evil, let him at least take a lenitive to ease it. *Opinio est quædam effeminata, ac levis: nec in dolore magis, quam eadem in voluptate: qua quum liquescimus fluimusque mollitid, apud aculeum sine clamore ferre non possumus.—Totum in eo est, ut tibi imperes:\** “There is a certain frivolous and effeminate opinion, and that not more in pain than it is even in pleasure itself, by which, whilst we roll in ease and wantonness, we cannot endure so much as the sting of a bee, without roaring. The whole secret lies in this, to command thyself.” As to the rest, a man does not transgress philosophy, by crying out against the acrimony of pains, and human frailty so much beyond measure; for they must at last be reduced to these invincible replies. If it be ill to live in necessity, at least there is no necessity upon a man to live in necessity. No man continues ill long, but by his own fault. He who has neither the courage to die, nor the heart to live; who will neither resist nor fly, what should be done to him.

\* Cic. Tusc. Quest. lib. ii. cap. 22.

## CHAPTER XLI.

*One Man's Honour not to be communicated to another.*

OF all the follies of the world, that which is most universally received, is the solicitude for reputation and glory, which we are fond of to that degree, as to abandon riches, peace, life, and health, which are effectual and substantial goods, to pursue this vain phantom, this mere echo, that has neither body nor hold to be taken of it: The vanity of a passion for honour.

*La fama ch' invaghisce a un dolce suono  
Gli superbi mortali, et par' si bella  
E un echo, un sogno, anzi d'un segno un' ombra,  
Ch' ad ogni vento si dilegua, et sgombra.\**

Glory, whose sweet and captivating sound  
Enchants proud mortals all the world around,  
Is but an echo, dream, or phantom fair,  
Mov'd and dispers'd by ev'ry breath of air.

And of all the unreasonable humours of men, it seems that this continues longer, even with philosophers themselves, than any other, and that they have the most adot to disengage themselves from this, as the most resty and obstinate of all human follies. *Quia etiam bene proficientes animos tentare non cessat*:† “Because it continually tempts even “virtuous minds.” There is not any one folly, of which reason so clearly blames the vanity, as this; but it is so deeply rooted in us, that I dare not determine, whether any one ever totally divested him-

\* Tasso, canto 14, stanza 63, Gierusalemme liberata.

† “Etiam sapientibus cupido gloriæ novissima exuitur.” The desire of glory is the last passion of which even wise men can divest themselves, Tacit. lib. iv. I question whether Montaigne had this passage in view; for it is so beautiful, that if he had thought of it, I fancy he could not have omitted to quote it.

‡ Aug. de Civit. Dei, lib. v. cap. 14.

self of it. After you have said and done all you can to disclaim it, it so strongly opposes your arguments, that you are hardly able to resist it: for\* (as Cicero says) even those who condemn it, choose that the books they write should bear their own names in the front, and seek to derive glory from seeming to despise it. All other things are communicable; in commerce, we lend our goods, and stake our lives for the necessity of our friends; but to communicate a man's honour, and to robe another with a man's own glory, is very rarely seen. And yet we have some examples of that kind.

Catulus Luctatius, in the Cimbrian war, having done all in his power to stop his soldiers flying from his enemy, ran away himself at last,† and counterfeited the coward, that his men might rather seem to follow their captain, than to fly from the enemy; which was abandoning his own reputation, to hide the shame of others. When Charles the fifth came into Provence, in the year 1537, it is said, that Antonio de Leva seeing the emperor positively resolved upon this expedition, and believing it would redound very much to his honour, did nevertheless oppose and dissuade him from it, to the end that the entire glory of that resolution should be attributed to his master; and that it might be said, his own opinion and foresight had been such, as that contrary to the sentiments of all, he had brought about so noble an enterprise; which was really doing him honour at his own expense.

Private or  
particular  
praise re-  
fused.

The Thracian ambassadors, coming to comfort Archileonida, the mother of Brasidas, upon the death of her son, and commending him so much, as to say he had not left his like behind him; she rejected this private and particular commendation to

\* "Ipsi illi philosophi, etiam illis libellis quos de contemnenda gloria scribunt, nomen suum inscribunt; in eo ipso in quo prædicationem nobilitatemque despiciunt, prædicari de se ac nominari volunt." Orat. pro Archia Poeta, cap. 11, edit. Gronov.

† Plutarch, in the Life of Caius Marius, cap. 8.

attribute it to the public: "Tell me not that," said she, "I know the city of Sparta has several citizens greater and more valiant than he was."\*

In the battle of Cressy,† the prince of Wales, Edward III. chooses to leave all the honour of the victory to his son. being then very young, had the vanguard committed to him, where the main stress of the battle happened to be, which made the lords that were with him, finding themselves overmatched, send to king Edward,‡ begging that he would please to advance to their relief; who thereupon inquiring of the condition his son was in, and being answered that he was yet living, and on horse-back; "I should then do him wrong," said the king, "now to go, and deprive him of the honour of winning this battle which he has so long disputed; what hazard soever he runs, the victory shall be entirely his own." Accordingly he would neither go nor send, knowing that if he went, it would be said all had been lost without his succour, and that the honour of the victory would be attributed to his majesty. *Semper enim quod postremum adjectum est, id rem totam videtur traxisse*: "For the last stroke to a business seems always to draw along with it the merit of the whole action." Many at Rome thought, and frequently said, that the noblest of Scipio's actions were, in part, due to Lelius, whose constant practice it was, nevertheless, to advance and support Scipio's grandeur and renown, without any care of his own. And Theopompus, king of Sparta, when a person told him the republic stood it out, because he knew so well how to command; "It is rather," answered he, "because the people know so well how to obey."§

As women succeeding to peerages, had, notwithstanding their sex, the privilege to assist and give in their votes, in causes appertaining to the jurisdiction

\* Plutarch, in the Notable Sayings of the Lacedæmonians, at the article *Brasidas*.

† In 1346.

‡ Froissart, vol. i. cap. 30.

§ Plutarch, in the article *Theopompus*.

Conduct of  
a bishop at  
the battle  
of Bou-  
vines.

of peers; so the ecclesiastical peers, notwithstanding their profession, were obliged to assist our kings in their wars, not only with their friends and servants, but in their own persons; as the bishop of Beauvais did, who, being with Philip Augustus at the battle of Bouvines,\* had a notable share in that action; but he did not think it fit for him to participate in the fruit and glory of that violent and bloody exercise. He, with his own hand, reduced several of the enemy that day to his mercy, whom he delivered to the first gentleman he met, either to kill, or receive them to quarter, referring the whole execution to his hand. Thus also did William, earl of Salisbury, to M. Jean de Nesle; who, with equal subtlety of conscience, would kill, but not wound, an enemy, and for that reason never fought but with a club.† And

\* Between Lisle and Tournay, in 1214.

† That is to say, "By a salvo of conscience, like to that other which I just now mentioned, this bishop chose to knock on the head, &c." In fact, this other salvo, which Montaigne had just attributed to the bishop of Beauvais, was not more frivolous than this, by which this same bishop made no scruple to knock those on the head, whom he did not choose to wound or kill with a sword. For the bishop of Beauvais is intended in the latter case, as well as in the former: "At the battle of Bouvines, Mezeray expressly says, Philip, bishop of Beauvais, brother to that king, did not strike with a sword, but with a club; thinking that knocking a man on the head was not spilling his blood."—Mr. Cotton, the last translator of these Essays into English, has confounded this passage entirely; for his not comprehending that this latter salvo of conscience had relation to the bishop of Beauvais, in the same manner as the former, instead of delivering up William earl of Salisbury to M. John de Nesle, he tells us, "That William earl of Salisbury made use of a salvo of conscience, with regard to M. John de Nesle, like to the other whom we named above: he would (continues Mr. Cotton) kill, but not wound him; and for that reason never fought with a mace." By the manner in which this translator speaks here of the earl of Salisbury, one would be apt to say, that he only engaged in this battle to kill John de Nesle. These are Mr. Cotton's own words. "As also did William earl of Salisbury to Messire Jean de Nesle, with a like subtlety of conscience to the other we named before; he would kill but not wound him, and for that reason never fought with a mace."—The confusion which I discover this ingenious translator to be in at this passage, makes me a little diffident of myself. But though in all the edi-

a certain person of my time, being reproached by the king, that he had laid hands on a priest, positively denied the fact; affirming he had only cudgelled and kicked him.

## CHAPTER XLII.

### *Of the Inequality amongst us.*

PLUTARCH says somewhere,\* that he does not find so great a difference between beast and beast, as he does between man and man. Which is said in reference to the internal qualities and perfections of

Extraord.  
inary  
difference  
between  
man and  
man.

tions of Montaigne, which I have seen, it is said, "With a salvo of conscience like to this other," I think I may venture to affirm that Montaigne's expression, "of a salvo of conscience like to this other," means to this other salvo of the bishop of Beauvais; and that he would have us to understand here, that by a cunning salvo, like to that which he had just mentioned, the same bishop of Beauvais was desirous to knock on the head, but not to wound; having, for that very reason, fought only with a club.—As for William, earl of Salisbury, it does not appear that he had the same scruple at the battle of Bouvines as the bishop of Beauvais. It is certain, at least, that this bishop took the earl of Salisbury, and delivered him prisoner to John de Nesle. This is what Montaigne says very clearly, before he mentioned this other cunning salvo of conscience which engaged the bishop of Beauvais to fight only with a club. And all that Montaigne has here advanced is very positively asserted in history. "William of Brittany," says John de Tillet, "in his history of king Philip Augustus, makes mention of the bishop of Beauvais, a prince of the blood, brother to the count de Dreux, a peer of France; who, being at the battle of Pont de Bouvines, with the said Philip Augustus, did, with one stroke of a club, knock down count William, surnamed Longspear, the bastard brother of the king of England, and commanded M. John de Nesle, knight, to make him his prisoner. The like did he with regard to many others, whom he laid sprawling on the ground: forasmuch as he was an ecclesiastic, the praise of his feats of arms is given as it were to others, and he only chose to fight with a club, that he might demolish without killing." Tillet's *Memoirs*, p. 220, printed at Troyes, 1578.

\* At the end of his *Treatise of Brutes* having the use of Reason.



the soul. And, in truth, I find (according to my poor judgment) so vast a distance between Epaminondas, and some that I know (who are yet men of common sense), that I could willingly improve upon Plutarch, and say, that there is more difference between such and such a man, than there is between such a man and such a beast :

*Hem ! vir viro quid præstat.\**

What great disparity among men we find !

And that there are as many degrees of wits, as there are cubits between this and heaven. But, as touching the estimate of men, it is strange that, ourselves excepted, no other creature is esteemed beyond its proper qualities. We commend a horse for its strength and sureness of foot :

*Volucrum*

*Si laudamus equum, facili cui plurima palma  
Fervet, et exultat rauco victoria circa.†*

So we for speed commend the horse that gains  
Successive prizes in the dusty plains,  
And which the trumpets in the circle grace,  
With their loud clangors for his well-run race :

A man to  
be valued  
for what he  
has in him,  
and not  
what he has  
about him.

and not for his rich caparisons ; a greyhound for his share of heels, not for his fine collar ; a hawk for her wing, not for her gesses and bells. Why, in like manner, do we not value a man for what is properly his own ? he has a great train, a beautiful palace, so much credit, such a revenue : all these are about him, but not in him. You will not buy a pig in a poke : if you cheapen a horse, you have him stripped of his housing-clothes, that he may appear naked and open to your eye ; or if he be clothed,‡ as they anciently were wont to present to princes to sell, it is only on the less important parts, that you may not so much consider the beauty of his colour, or the breadth of his crupper, as to examine his legs, eyes, and feet, which are the members of greatest use :

\* Ter. Eunuch. act. ii. scen. iii. ver. 1.

† Juvenal. sat. viii. ver. 57.

‡ Idem, ibid.

*Regibus hic mos est, ubi equos mercantur, opertos  
Suspiciunt, ne si facies, ut sæpe, decora  
Molli fulta pede est, emptorem inducat hiantem,  
Quod pulchræ clunes, breve quod caput, ardua cervix.\**

When skilful jockeys would a courser buy,  
They strip him naked, head, back, breast, and thigh;  
For oft an eager chapman is betray'd,  
To buy a founder'd or a spavin'd jade,  
While he admires a thin, light-shoulder'd chest,  
A little head, broad back, and rising crest.

Why,† in giving your estimate of a man, do you prize him wrapped and muffled up in clothes? He then discovers nothing to you, but such parts as are not in the least his own; and conceals those, by which alone one may rightly judge of his value. It is the price of the blade that you inquire into, and not of the scabbard: you would not perhaps bid a farthing for him, if you saw him stripped. You are to judge of him by himself, and not by what he wears. And as one of the ancients very pleasantly said, do you know why you repute him tall? You reckon the height of the pattins,‡ whereas the pedestal is no part of the stature. Measure him without his stilts, let him lay aside his revenues, and his titles, let him present himself in his shirt, then examine if his body be sound and sprightly, active, and disposed to perform its function? What mind has he? Is it beautiful, capable, and happily provided of all its faculties? Is it rich in what is its own, or in what it has borrowed? Has fortune no hand in the affair? Can it, without winking, face the lightning of swords; is it indifferent whether life expire by the mouth or the throat? Is it settled, even, and content?§ That is what is to be examined, and by that you are to judge of the vast difference between man and man. Is he

\* Hor. lib. i. sect. 2, ver. 86, &c.

† “Equum empturus solvi jubes stratum,” &c.—“Hominem involutum æstimas?” Seneca, epist. 80.

‡ “Quare magnus videtur? Cum basi illum suam metiri.” Id. ep. 76.

§ Seneca,

————— *Sapiens, sibi qui imperiosus*  
*Quem neque pauperies, neque mors, neque vincula terrent,*  
*Responsare cupidinibus, contemnere honores*  
*Fortis, et in seipso totus teres atque rotundus,*  
*Externi nequid valeat per læve morari,*  
*In quem manca ruit semper fortuna ?\**

The man is truly wise that can control,  
 And govern all the passions of his soul ;  
 Whom poverty, nor chains, nor death affright,  
 Who's proof against the charms of vain delight ;  
 Who can ambition's noblest gifts despise,  
 Firm in himself, who on himself relies :  
 Polish'd, and round, who runs his proper course,  
 And breaks misfortune with superior force.

Such a man is raised, five hundred fathoms above  
 kingdoms and duchies, he is an absolute monarch  
 himself :

*Sapiens pol ipse fingit fortunam sibi.†*  
 The wise man his own fortune makes.

What remains for him to covet or desire ?

————— *Nonne videmus*  
*Nil aliud sibi naturam latrare, nisi ut quoi*  
*Corpore sejunctus dolor absit, mente fruatur*  
*Jucundo sensu, cura semotus metuque.‡*

We see that nature only seeks for ease,  
 A body free from pains, free from disease,  
 A mind from cares and jealousies at peace.

Compare with such a one, the common rabble of  
 mankind, stupid and mean-spirited, servile, instable,  
 and continually floating with the tempest of various  
 passions, that tosses and tumbles them to and fro,  
 and all depending upon others ; and you will find a  
 greater distance between them, than between heaven  
 and earth ; and yet so blind are we, that we make  
 little or no account of it. Whereas, if we consider  
 a peasant and a king, a nobleman and a vassal, a  
 magistrate and a private man, a rich man and a poor

\* Horace, lib. ii. sat. 7, ver. 83, &c.

† Plaut. Tri. act. ii. scen. 2, ver. 84.

‡ Lucret. lib. ii. ver. 16, &c.

one, there appears a vast disparity, though they differ no more (as a man may say) than in their breeches.

In Thrace, the king was distinguished from his people after a very pleasant and odd manner : he had a religion by himself, a God too, all his own, and which his subjects were not to adore, viz. Mercury ; whilst, on the other hand, he disdained to have any thing to do with theirs, Mars, Bacchus, and Diana.\* And yet they are no other than pictures, that make no essential difference ; for as you see actors in a play, representing the person of a duke or an emperor, upon the stage, and immediately after, in the tiring-room, return to their true and original condition, of footmen and porters ; so the emperor, whose pomp so dazzles you in public,

Wherein  
the kings  
of Thrace  
disting-  
guished  
themselves  
from their  
subjects.

*Scilicet, et grandes viridi cum luce smaragdi  
Auro includuntur, teriturque Thalassina vestis  
Assidue, et veneris sudorem exercita potat.†*

Rings, with great emeralds, are in gold enchast,  
To dart green lustre : and the sea-green vest  
Continually is worn and rubb'd to frets,  
Whilst it imbibes the juice that Venus sweats.

if you will only peep behind the curtain, you will find nothing more than an ordinary man, and, perhaps, more contemptible than the meanest of his subjects. *Ille beatus introrsum est, istius bracteata felicitas est :‡* “ True happiness lies within his breast ; the other is but a counterfeit felicity.” Cowardice, irresolution, ambition, spite, and envy, are as predominant in him, as in another :

Kings sub-  
ject to the  
same pas-  
sions and  
accidents  
as other  
men.

*Non enim gazæ, neque consularis  
Summovet lictor, miseros tumultus  
Mentis, et curas laqueata circum  
Tecta volantes.§*

\* Herodotus, indeed, says (lib. v. p. 391), that the Thracian kings worshipped Mercury above all other gods, that they only swore by him alone, and pretended to be descended from him ; but he does not say that they despised Mars, Bacchus, and Diana, the only deities of their subjects.

† Lucret. lib. iv. ver. 1119, &c.

‡ Seneca, ep. 115.

§ Horace, lib. ii. ode 16, ver. 11, &c.

For neither weakh nor pow'r control  
The wretched tumults of the soul ;  
Or force those cares to stand aloof,  
Which hover round the vaulted roof.

Care and fear attack him, even in the centre of his  
battalions :

*Re verâque metus hominum, curæque sequaces,  
Nec metuant sonitus armorum, nec fera tela,  
Audacterque inter reges, rerumque potentes  
Versantur, neque fulgorem reverentur ab auro.\**

For fears and cares, warring with human hearts,  
Dread not the clash of arms, nor points of darts ;  
But with great kings and potentates make bold,  
Spite of their purple, and their glitt'ring gold.

Do fevers, gouts, and the head-ach, spare them any  
more than one of us ? When old age hangs heavy  
upon a prince's shoulders, can the yeomen of his  
guard ease him of the burden ? When he is astonished  
with the apprehension of death, can the gentlemen  
of his bedchamber secure him ? When jealousy, or  
any other capricio swims in his brain, can our fine  
compliments restore him to his good humour ? The  
canopy embroidered with pearl and gold, which he  
lies under, has no virtue to ease fits of the cholic :

*Nec calidæ citius decedunt corpore felres  
Textilibus si in picturis, ostroque rubenti  
Jacteris, quàm si plebeiâ in veste cubandum est.†*

Nor sooner will a bed superb assuage  
The dreadful symptoms of a fever's rage,  
Than if the homely couch were meanly spread  
With poorest blankets of the coarsest thread.

Alexander  
and Anti-  
gonus scorn  
their flat-  
terers.

The flatterers of Alexander the Great possessed him  
that he was the son of Jupiter : but being one day  
wounded, and observing the blood stream from his  
wound : " What say you now,"† said he, " is not  
" this blood of a crimson colour, and purely human ?

\* Lucret. lib. ii. ver. 47, &c.

† Idem, lib. ii. ver. 34, &c.

† Plutarch, in the Notable Sayings of the ancient Kings, &c. in  
the article of *Alexander*.

“ This is not of the complexion with that which  
 “ Homer makes to issue from the wounded Gods.”  
 The poet Hermedorus\* had wrote a poem in honour  
 of Antigonus, wherein he called him the son of the  
 sun : “ But whoever empties my close-stool,” said  
 Antigonus, “ knows the contrary.”/ He is but a  
 man at best ; and if he be ill qualified from his birth,  
 the empire of the universe cannot set him to rights :

Puellæ

*Hunc raptant, quidquid culcaverit hic, rosa fiat.†*

Though maids should ravish him, and where he goes,  
 In every step he takes should spring a rose.

What of all that, if he be a fool and a sot? even In what  
 pleasure and good fortune are not relished without sense the  
 vigour and understanding : favours of  
 fortune are  
 a good.

*Hæc perinde sunt, ut illius animus, qui ea possidet,  
 Qui uti scit, ei bona, illi, qui non utitur recte, mala.‡*

Things to the owners' minds their merit square,  
 Good if well used, if ill, they evils are.

Whatever the benefits of fortune are, they yet re-  
 quire a palate fit to relish them : it is fruition, and  
 not mere possession, that renders us happy :

*Non domus, et fundus, non æris aceruus et auri,  
 Ægroto domini deduxit corpore febres,  
 Non animo curas ; valeat possessor oportet,  
 Qui comportatis rebus bene cogitat uti,  
 Qui cupit, aut metuit, juvat illum sic domus aut res,  
 Ut lippum pictæ tabulæ, fomenta podagram.§*

Nor house, nor lands, nor heaps of labour'd ore  
 Can give the fev'rish lord one moment's rest,  
 Or drive one sorrow from his anxious breast ;  
 The rich possessor must be bless'd with health,  
 To reap the comforts of his hoarded wealth.  
 He that desires or fears, diseas'd in mind,  
 Wealth profits him, as pictures do the blind,  
 Or plasters gouty feet, &c.

\* Plutarch, in the Notable Sayings of the ancient Kings, &c. in  
 the article of Antigonus.

† Pers. sat. ii. ver. 38, 39.

‡ Ter. Heaut. act. i. sc. 2, ver. 21, 22.

§ Hor. lib. i. ep. 2.

He is a sot, his taste is palled and flat; he no more enjoys what he has, than one that has a cold relishes the flavour of canary; or than a horse is sensible of his rich accoutrements. Plato, therefore, is in the right, when he tells us, that health, beauty,\* strength, riches, and all things called good, are equally evil to the unjust, as good to the just, and the evil on the contrary the same. Now then, where either the body or the mind is in disorder, what signify these external conveniences? Considering that the least prick with a pin, or the least passion of the soul, is sufficient to deprive us of the pleasure of being monarchs of the world. At the first twitch of the gout, it is to much purpose to be called sir, and your majesty :

*Totus, et argento conflatus, totus et auro.†*

And to abound with silver and gold.

Does he not forget his palaces and grandeur? If he be angry, can his being a prince keep him from looking red, and turning pale, and grinding his teeth like a madman? Now if he be a man of parts, and well descended, royalty adds very little to his happiness :

*Si ventri bend, si lateri est pedibusque tuis, nil  
Divitiæ poterunt regales addere majus.‡*

Who tastes the happiness from health which flows,  
Reaps greater bliss than regal wealth bestows.

He discerns it is nothing but false and counterfeit. Nay, perhaps, he would be of king Seleucus's opinion,§ that he who knew the weight of a sceptre, would not stoop to take it up from the ground; which he said in reference to the great and painful duty incumbent upon a good king. Doubtless it can be no easy task to rule others, when we find it

\* De Legibus, lib. ii. p. 579, where this subject is handled at large, and after a divine manner.

† Hor. lib. i. el. 1, ver. 71.

‡ Idem, lib. i. ep. 12, ver. 5, 6.

§ Plutarch, in his tract, whether an old man ought to concern himself with public affairs, cap. 12.

so hard a matter to govern ourselves. And as to the thing dominion, that seems so charming, considering the frailty of human wisdom, and the difficulty of choice in things that are new and doubtful, I am very much of opinion, that it is much more easy and pleasant to follow than to lead : and that it is a great happiness to the mind, to have only one beaten part to walk in, and to have none to answer for but for a man's self :

*Ut satius multo jam sit, parere quietum,  
Quam regere imperio res velle.\**

So that 'tis better calmly to obey,  
Than in the storms of state a sceptre sway.

To which we may add that saying of Cyrus, that no man was fit to rule, but he who in his own worth was superior to all those he was to govern.

But king Hieron, in Xenophon,† says farther, that Kings not even in the fruition of pleasure, they are in a worse condition than private men ; forasmuch as the opportunities and facility they have of obtaining it, diminish the enjoyment : in such a condition to taste pleasures as private men.

*Pingus amor, nimiumque potens, in lædia nobis  
Vertitur, et stomacho dulcis ut esca necet.‡*

Excessive love, in loathing ever ends,  
As richest sauce the stomach most offends.

Can we think that the singing boys of the choir take any great pleasure in their own music ; they are rather surfeited with it. Feasts, balls, masquerades, and tiltings, delight such as but rarely see, and desire to be at such solemnities : but after frequent repetitions, the relish of them grows flat and harsh. Nay, the ladies do not so much charm those who often enjoy them. He who anticipates thirst, can never find the true pleasure of drinking. Stage plays, and tumbling tricks, are pleasant to the spectators, but a

\* Lucret. lib. v. ver. 1126.

† In Xenophon's Tract, entitled, Hieron, or the Condition of Kings.

‡ Ov. Amor. lib. ii. eleg. 19.



drudgery to those by whom they are performed. And this is actually so ; we see that princes divert themselves sometimes, in disguising their qualities, to stoop to the forms of low and vulgar life :

*Plerumque gratæ principibus vires,  
Mundæque parvo sub lare pauperum  
Cœnæ sine aulæis, et ostro,  
Sollicitum explicuere frontem.\**

Changes have often pleas'd the great ;  
And in a cell a homely treat  
Of healthy food, and cleanly dress'd ;  
Though no rich hangings grace the rooms,  
Or purple wrought in Tyrian looms,  
Have smooth'd a wrinkled brow, and calm'd a ruffled breast.

Nothing is so distasteful and clogging, as abundance. What man's appetite would not be palled, to see three hundred women at his service, as the grand seignior has in his seraglio ? And what enjoyment of pleasure did he reserve to himself, who never went a hawking with less than seven thousand falcons ?

Why great  
men ought  
to be more  
careful of  
concealing  
their faults  
than little  
ones.

Besides, I think that grandeur is no small enemy to pleasures. Great men are too conspicuous, and lie too open to every one's remark. They are obliged more than others to conceal their errors, since what is only reputed indiscretion in us, the people brand in them with the names of tyranny, and contempt of the laws. Plato, indeed, in his *Gorgias*, defines a tyrant to be one, who, in a city, has licence to do whatever he will. And for this reason, the publication of their vice does oftentimes more mischief than the vice itself. Every one fears to be pried into, or controlled ; but princes are, even to their very looks and thoughts ; the people conceiving that they have a right, and an interest to be judges of them : besides, that spots appear greater, by reason of the eminence and lustre of the place where they are seated ; and that a speck, or a wart,

\* Hor. lib. iii. ode 20, ver. 13, &c.

seems greater in them, than a gash does in others. This is the reason why the poets feign the amours of Jupiter to be carried on in borrowed shapes; and amongst the many amorous intrigues they lay to his charge, there is only one, as I remember, where he appears in his own majesty and grandeur.

But let us return to Hieron, who complains of the inconveniences he found in his royalty,\* in that he could not go abroad, and travel at liberty, being as it were a prisoner within the bounds of his own dominion; and that, in all his actions, he was surrounded with a troublesome crowd. And in truth, to see our kings sit all alone at table, environed with so many people talking, and so many strangers staring upon him, I have often been moved, rather to pity, than, to envy them. King Alphonsus was wont to say, that, in this respect, asses were in a better condition than kings, their masters permitting them to feed at their ease; a grant which kings cannot obtain of their servants. And it would never enter into my fancy, that it could be of any benefit to the life of a man of sense, to have twenty people prating about him when he is at stool; or that the services of a man of ten thousand livres a year, or that has taken Casal, or defended Siena, should be more commodious and acceptable to him, than those of a good experienced valet.

The advantages of sovereignty are but imaginary, in a manner: every degree of fortune has in it some shadow of sovereignty. Cæsar calls all the lords of France, having free franchise within their own demesnes, Roytelets, or petty kings; and, in truth, the name of Sire excepted, they go a great length with our monarchs: for do but look into the provinces remote from court, as Brittany for example, and take notice of the attendants, the vassals, the officers, the employment, service, and ceremony of a nobleman, that lives retired from court, at his own

Kings confined in the limits of their own country.

The condition of country gentlemen in France in Montaigne's time.

\* In Xenophon's Tract, entitled, Hieron, sect. 2.

house in the country, and that has been bred up amongst his tenants and servants; and observe the flight of his imagination; there is nothing more royal; he hears talk of his sovereign once a-year, as of a king of Persia, without taking any farther notice of him, than as some remote kindred in his secretary's register. And, in truth, our laws are easy enough; so easy, that a gentleman of France scarce feels the weight of sovereignty above twice in his life. Real and effectual subjection only concerns such amongst us, as voluntarily accommodate themselves to it, and who, by such services, aim at wealth and honour: for a man that loves his own fire-side, and can govern his house, without engaging in quarrels, or suits of law, is as free as a duke of Venice. *Paucos servitus, plures servitutem tenent*.\* "Servitude seizes few, but many seize her." But that which most affected Hieron was, that he found himself destitute of all friendship, and mutual society, wherein the best and most perfect enjoyment of human life consist. For what testimony of affection and good-will can I draw from him that owes me, whether he will or no, all that he is able to perform? Can I place any dependance on his real respect to me, from his humble way of speaking, and submissive behaviour, when he is not at liberty to refuse it to me? The humour we receive from those that fear us, is not honour; those respects are paid to my royalty, and not to me.

*Maximum hoc regni bonum est,  
Quod facta domini cogitur populus sui  
Quam ferre, tam laudare.*†

'Tis the great benefit of kings, that they  
Who are by law subjected to their sway,  
Are bound, in all their princes say or do,  
Not only to submit, but praise it too.

Do I not see that the wicked and the good king, he that is hated, and he that is beloved, has the one as

\* Seneca, ep. 22. † Seneca, Thiest. act. ii. sc. 1, ver. 30, &c.

much reverence paid him as the other? My predecessor was, and my successor will be, served with the same state. If my subjects do me no harm, it is no evidence of any good affection; why should I look upon it as such, seeing it is not in their power to do it, if they would? No one follows me, upon the account of any friendship between him and me; for there can be no contracting of friendship, where there is so little relation and correspondence: my own high station has put me out of a familiarity with men: there is too great disparity between us; they follow me either upon the account of decency and custom; or rather my fortune than me, to increase their own: all they say to me, or do for me, is but dissembled, their liberty being, on all sides, restrained by the great power I have over them. I see nothing about me but what is under covert and a mask. The emperor Julian being one day applauded by his courtiers for his exact justice: \* "I would be proud of these praises," said he, "did they come from persons that durst condemn or disapprove the contrary, in case I should do it." All the real advantages of princes are common to them with men of the middle rank. It is for the gods to mount winged horses, and feed upon ambrosia; kings have no other sleep, nor other appetite, than we; their steel is of no better temper than that we arm ourselves with; their crowns neither defend them from the rain, nor the sun.

Dioclesian, who wore a crown with great honour and good fortune, resigned it for the happiness of a private life: and some time after, the necessity of public affairs requiring that he should re-assume his charge, he said to those who came to court him to it, "You would not offer to persuade me to this, had you seen the fine row of trees I have planted in my orchard, and the delicate melons I have sowed in my garden."

Why Dioclesian resigned the empire.

\* Ammianus Marcel. lib. xxvii. cap. 10.

The happiest government.

In the opinion of Anacharsis, the happiest state of government would be, where, all other things being equal, precedence should be dealt to the virtues,\* and repulses to the vices of men.

The vain ambition of Pyrrhus.

When king Pyrrhus prepared for his expedition into Italy, his wise counsellor Cyneas, to make him sensible of the vanity of his ambition : " Well, sir," said he,† " to what end do you make all this mighty " preparation ? " To make myself master of Italy," replied the king. " And what then ? " said Cyneas, " I will pass over into Gaul and Spain," said the other. " And what next ? " " I will then go to reduce Africa ; and lastly, when I have brought the whole world to my subjection, I will rest content, and live at my own ease." " For God's sake, sir," replied Cyneas, " tell me what hinders that you may not, if you please, be now in that condition ? Why do you not now, at this instant, settle yourself in the state you say you aim at, and spare yourself the labour and hazard you must encounter : "

*Nimirum quia non bene norat quæ esset habendi  
Finis, et omnino quoad crescat vera voluptas.‡*

The end of being rich he did not know ;  
Nor to what pitch felicity should grow.

I will conclude with an old observation which I think very pat to the purpose :

*Mores cuique sui fingunt fortunam.§*

Himself, not fortune, ev'ry one must blame,  
Since men's own manners all their fortunes frame.

\* Plutarch, in the Banquet of the seven wise Men, ch. 13.

† Plutarch, in the Life of Pyrrhus, chap. 7 of Amyot's Translation.

‡ Lucret. lib. v. ver. 1431.

§ Corn. Nep. in Vit. Attici.

## CHAPTER XLIII.

*Of Sumptuary Laws.*

THE method by which our laws attempt to regulate idle and vain expenses in meat and clothes, seem to be quite contrary to the end designed. The true way would be, to beget in men a contempt of silks and gold, as vain and useless; whereas we add honour and value to them, which sure is a very improper way to create disgust. For to enact, that none but princes shall eat turbot, nor wear velvet or gold lace, and interdict these things to the people, what is it but to bring them into greater esteem, and to set every one more agog to eat and wear them? Let kings (without more ado) leave off these ensigns of grandeur, they have enough besides; such excesses are more excusable in a subject, than a prince. We may learn, by the example of several nations, better ways for the external distinction of rank and quality (which truly I conceive to be very requisite in a state), without fostering such manifest corruption and inconvenience for this purpose.

It is strange how suddenly, and with how much ease, custom, in these indifferent things, establishes itself, and becomes authority. We had scarce worn cloth a year, for the court mourning of Henry the Second, till silks were grown into such universal contempt, that a man so clad, was presently concluded to be a citizen. The silks were divided between the physicians and surgeons, and though all other people almost went in the same dress, there were notwithstanding, in one respect or other, visible distinctions of men's qualities. How suddenly are the greasy chamois doublets become the fashion in our armies, whilst all neatness and richness of

Gold and silver more to be despised by a prince than the subjects.  
When silk clothes first began to be despised in France.

habit fall into contempt? Let kings but begin to leave off this expense, and in a month the business will be done throughout the kingdom; and without an edict we shall all follow. It should be rather proclaimed on the contrary, that no one should wear scarlet or gold lace, but whores and tumblers.

The laws  
which Za-  
leucus made  
to check  
luxury.

Zaleucus, with the like invention, reclaimed the corrupted manners of the Locrians. His laws were,\* that no free woman should be allowed any more than one maid to follow her, unless she was drunk: nor was to stir out of the city by night; nor wear jewels of gold, or an embroidered gown, unless she was a professed whore; no men but ruffians were to wear a gold ring, nor to be seen in one of those effeminate vests of the manufacture of Miletum. By which infamous exceptions, he diverted his citizens from superfluities, and pernicious pleasures; and it was a project of great utility to attract men, by honour and ambition, to their duty and obedience.

The court  
practice is  
a rule for  
the French  
nation.

Our kings may do what they please in such external reformatiōns; their own inclinations stand in this case for a law. *Quicquid principes faciunt, præcipere videntur* :† “What princes themselves do, they seem “to enjoin others to do.” Whatever is done at court, passes for a rule through the rest of France. Let the courtiers but discountenance those abominable breeches, that discover so much of the parts which should be concealed; those tun-bellied doublets, that make us look like I know not what, and are so unfit for the bearing of arms; those long effeminate locks of hair; the silly custom of kissing what we present to our equals, as well as our hands in saluting them; a ceremony in former times only due to princes: let them not indulge a gentleman to

\* Diodor. Sicul. lib. xii. cap. 20.

† Quintilian pro milite Declamat. p. 38, lib. iii. in 8vo. ex Officinâ Hackianâ, 1665.

appear in a place of respect without his sword, unbuttoned and untrust, as though he came from the house of office; and let it not be suffered that, contrary to the custom of our forefathers, and the particular privilege of the noblesse of this kingdom, we shall stand a long way off bareheaded to them in what place soever, and the same to a hundred others (so many tierces and quarts of kings we have got now-a-days), and the like of other such vicious innovations; they will see them all presently vanish. These are, it is true, superficial errors, but, however, a bad prognostic; and it is enough to inform us that the whole fabric is crazy and tottering, when we see the rough-cast of our walls cleave and split.

Plato, in his laws,\* esteems nothing of more pernicious consequence to his city, than to give youth the liberty of introducing any change in their habits, gestures, dances, songs, and exercises, from one form to another;† shifting from this to that side, hunting after novelties, and applauding the inventors; by which means manners are corrupted, and the old institutions come to be nauseated and despised. In all things, saving only in those that are evil, a change is to be feared; even the change of seasons, winds, provisions, and humours. And no laws are in their true credit, but those to which God has given so long a continuance, that no one knows their beginning, or that there ever were others.

New fash-  
ions fatal  
to youth.

\* Lib. vii. p. 631.

† At present the wit and politeness of several European nations consist very much in frequently altering the fashion of their clothes, and in treating those they have just quitted with insipid raillery, if those modes are still kept up by their neighbours, or in any town of the country, remote from the capital. As to this human frailty, see *Montaigne*, ch. xlix. of this volume.



## CHAPTER XLIV.

*Of Sleep.*

**REASON** directs, that we should always go the same way, but not always the same pace. And consequently, though a wise man ought not so much to give the reins to human passions, as to let them turn him from the right path; he may, notwithstanding, without prejudice to his duty, leave it to them to hasten, or to slack his speed, and not fix himself like a motionless and insensible colossus. Could virtue itself put on flesh and blood, I believe the pulse would beat faster going on to an assault, than in going to dinner: nay, there is a necessity it should beat and be moved upon this head. I have taken notice, as of an uncommon thing in some great men, who, in the highest and most important enterprises, have been loth to rise from their seat, or so much as to shorten their sleep.\* Alexander the Great, on the day assigned for that decisive battle with Darius, slept so profoundly and so long in the morning, that Parmenio was forced to enter his chamber, go to his bed side, and to call him several times by his name, in order to awake him, because the hour of battle was just at hand.

The profound sleep of some great personages in their most important affairs.

The emperor Otho, like Cato, slept just before he killed himself.

The emperor Otho, having put on a resolution to kill himself, the same night, after having settled his domestic affairs, divided his money amongst his servants, and set a good edge upon a sword he had made choice of for the purpose,† and staying only to be satisfied whether all his friends were retired in safety, he fell into such a sound sleep, that the gentlemen of

\* Plutarch, in the Life of Alexander, ch. 11 of Amyot's translation.

† Plutarch, in the Life of Otho, ch. 8.

his chamber heard him snore. The death of this emperor has in it many circumstances similar to that of the great Cato, and particularly this: for Cato being ready to dispatch himself, whilst he only staid his hand till they brought him the news, whether the senators he had sent away were put out from the port of Utica,\* he fell into so sound a sleep, that they heard him into the next room; and he, whom he had sent to the port, having awaked him, to let him know that the tempestuous weather had hindered the senators from putting to sea, he dispatched away another messenger, and composing himself again in the bed, slept so, till, by the return of the last messenger, he had certain intelligence they were gone.

We may here further compare him with Alexander Cato's too, in that great and dangerous storm that threatened Cato by the sedition of the tribune Metellus, who, attempting to publish a decree for the calling of Pompey with his army into the city, at the time of Catiline's conspiracy, was opposed only by Cato, so that very sharp language and bitter menaces passed between them in the senate about that affair; but it was the next day, in the forenoon, that the controversy was to be decided, when Metellus, besides the favour of the people, and of Cæsar (at that time of Pompey's faction), was to appear accompanied with a rabble of foreign slaves and desperate fencers; and Cato only fortified with his own courage and constancy; so that his relations, domestics, and many good people were in great apprehensions for him; and some there were, who passed the whole night without sleep, eating, or drinking, because of the manifest danger they saw him exposed to; for which his wife and sisters did nothing but weep, and torment themselves in his house; whereas he, on the contrary, comforted every one, and after having supped in his usual manner, went to bed,† and slept

Cato's tranquillity just before a popular commotion.

\* Plutarch, in the Life of Cato of Utica, ch. 19. † Id. *ibid.* ch. 8.

profoundly till morning, that one of his fellow-tribunes roused him to go to the encounter. The knowledge we have of the greatness of this man's courage from the rest of his life, may warrant us to pronounce, that his indifference proceeded from a soul so much elevated above such accidents, that he disdained to let it take any more hold of his thought, than any other ordinary adventure.

Profound  
sleep of  
Augustus  
just before  
a battle.

In the naval victory that Augustus won of Sextus Pompeius in Sicily, just as they were to begin the fight he was so fast asleep, that his friends were compelled to wake him to give the signal of battle:\* and this was what gave Mark Antony afterwards occasion to reproach him, that he had not the courage, so much as with open eyes, to behold the order of his battle, nor to face the soldiers, till Agrippa had brought him news of the victory he had obtained over his enemies.

But as to young Marius, who did much worse (for the day of the last battle, against Sylla,† after he had marshalled his army, and given the word and the signal of battle, he laid him down under the shade of a tree to repose himself, and fell so fast asleep, that the rout and flight of his men could hardly awake him, having seen nothing of the fight), he is said to have been at that time so extremely spent, with labour and want of sleep, that nature could hold out no longer. Now, upon what has been said, the physicians may consider whether sleep be so necessary that our lives depend upon it: for we read that king Perseus, of Macedon, being prisoner at Rome, was killed by being debarred from sleep; but Pliny instances such as have lived long without sleep.‡ Herodotus speaks of nations, where the men sleep

\* Suetonius, in the Life of Augustus, cap. 16.

† Plutarch, in the Life of Sylla, cap. 13.

‡ He mentions but one instance that I find, which is of Mæcenas, who, he says, for the last three years of his life had not one moment's sleep. Nat. Hist. lib. vii. cap. 52.

and wake by half years.\* And they who wrote the life of Epimenides affirm, that he slept fifty-seven years together.†

## CHAPTER XLV.

### *Of the Battle of Dreux.*

OUR battle of Dreux<sup>2</sup> is remarkable for several uncommon accidents: but such as do not much favour the reputation of the duke of Guise, say he was to blame for making a halt, and delaying time with the forces he commanded, whilst the constable, who was general of the army, was raked through and through with the enemy's artillery: and that he had much better have run the hazard of charging the enemy in the flank, than staying for the advantage of falling in upon the rear, to suffer so great a loss.

But, besides what the event demonstrated, who-  
ever will consider it without prejudice, will, I think, easily be induced to confess that the aim and design, not of a captain only, but of every private soldier, ought to be a victory in general; and that no particular occurrences, how nearly soever they may concern his own interest, should divert him from that pursuit. Philopœmen,§ in an encounter with Machanidas, having sent before a good strong party of

Victory,  
the principal aim of the general and every soldier.

\* Herodotus speaks of this only by hear-say, and positively declares he did not believe it, lib. iv. p. 264. But perhaps he took this story in too literal a sense, and that it was intended for no other than a hint to him, that the people who live under the pole, are deprived of the light of the sun for six months in the year, but enjoy it for the following six months; which is very true, if there be inhabitants in that part of the globe.

† Diogenes Laertius, in the Life of Epimenides, lib. i. sect. 109.

‡ It was fought anno 1562, in the reign of Charles IX. and won by the conduct and valour of the duke of Guise.

§ Plutarch, in the Life of Philopœmen, cap. 6.

his archers, to begin the skirmish, which were routed by the enemy, the pursuers pushing on their victory near the corps where Philopœmen was, though his soldiers were impatient to fall on, yet he did not think fit to stir from his post, nor to face the enemy to relieve his men, but having suffered them to be pursued, and cut in pieces before his face, he charged a battalion of the enemy's foot, when he saw them left naked by their horse; and notwithstanding they were Lacedæmonians, yet taking them in the nick, when thinking themselves secure of the victory, they began to fall into disorder; he did his business with great facility, and then put himself in pursuit of Machanidas. This case very much resembles that of Monsieur de Guise.

Battle of  
Agésilas  
with the  
Bœotians.

In that bloody battle between Agésilas and the Bœotians, which Xenophon, who was present at it, reports to be the sharpest that he had ever seen, Agésilas\* waved the advantage that fortune presented him, to let the battalion of Bœotians pass by, rather than charge them in the rear, so sure he made himself of the victory, judging it would be more art than valour, to proceed that way: and therefore, to show his prowess, he preferred charging them in the front; but he was well beaten, and wounded for his pains, and constrained at last to take the course he had at first neglected; opening his battalion to give passage to this torrent of the Bœotians, who being passed by, he taking notice that they marched in disorder, like men that thought themselves quite out of danger, pursued, and charged them in flank and rear; yet he could not bring it to so general a rout, but that they leisurely retreated, still facing about upon him till they got to a place of safety.

\* Plutarch, in the Life of Agésilas, cap. 6.

## CHAPTER XLVI.

*Of Names.*

**W**HAT variety of herbs soever are in the dish goes by the general name of a sallad. In like manner, under the consideration of names, I will make a hotch-potch of different articles.

Every nation has certain names that, I know not why, are disliked, as with us, John, William, Benedict. In the genealogy of princes there seems also to be certain names particularly affected, as the Ptolemies of Egypt, the Henries of England, the Charleses of France, the Baldwins of Flanders, and the Williams of our ancient Aquitaine, from whence, it is said, the name of Guienne has its derivation; which, how far fetched soever, there are as improbable derivations in Plato himself.

It is also a frivolous thing, yet worthy to be recorded for the strangeness of it, which is writ by an eye-witness; that Henry, duke of Normandy, son of Henry II. king of England, giving an entertainment in France, the concourse of nobility and gentry was so great, that being, for fancy's sake, divided into companies of the same names, in the first, which consisted of Williams, there were a hundred and ten knights sitting at the table, without reckoning the ordinary gentlemen, and their servants.

It is as pleasant to distinguish the tables by the names of the guests, as it was in the emperor Geta\* to distinguish the several dishes of his meat by the first letters of the meats themselves, where those that began with B were served up together, as bacon, brawn, beef, bream, bustards, and so of others.

There is a saying, that it is a good thing to have a good name, that is to say, credit, and a good re-

Some names disliked: others fatally affected in the genealogies of some princes.

Nobility placed at different tables at a feast, by a resemblance of names.

Dishes of meat served up according to the order of the alphabet.

It is good to have a name easy

\* *Ælii Spartiani Antoninus Geta*, p. 92, *Hist. August.*

to be pronounced.

pute : but besides this, it is really convenient to have such a name as is easy to be pronounced and remembered ; by reason that kings, and other great persons, by that means the more easily know, and the more hardly forget us ; and indeed, of our own servants, we more frequently call and employ those whose names are the most ready upon the tongue. I myself have seen Henry II. when he could not remember a gentleman's name of our country of Gascony, and was fain to call one of the queen's maids of honour by the general name of the race, her own family name was so strange. Socrates also thinks it worthy a father's care to give easy names to his children.

The origin of the foundation of Notre Dame la Grande, at Poitiers.

It is said, that the foundation of Notre Dame la Grande, at Poitiers, was owing to a young debauchee, formerly living in that place, who having got a whore, and, at her first coming in, asking her name, and being answered, that it was Mary, he felt himself so suddenly penetrated with the awe of religion, and the reverence of that sacred name of the virgin mother of our Saviour, that he not only immediately put his mistress away from him, but became a reformed man for the remainder of his life ; and, in consideration of this miracle, there was erected upon the spot, where this young man's house stood, first a chapel dedicated to our Lady, and afterwards the church that we now see standing there. This vocal and auricular reproof made its way most devoutly into the soul. This, that follows, insinuated itself merely by the corporeal senses ; Pythagoras being in company with some young rakes, and perceiving that, heated with the feast, they plotted to go and violate an honest house, commanded the minstrel to alter the tune,\* and by a solemn, grave, and spondaic music, gently charmed and laid asleep their ardour. Will not posterity say, that our modern reformation has been delicately exact, in having not only struggled with errors and vices, and filled

\* Sextus Empiricus adversus Mathematicum, lib. vi. p. 128.

the world with devotion, humility, obedience, peace, and all kinds of virtue; but having proceeded so far as to quarrel with the ancient baptismal names of Charles, Lewis, and Francis, to people the world with Methusalems, Ezeziels, and Malachies, which have a much more spiritual sound?

A gentleman, my neighbour, reckoning up the superior advantages of old times, in comparison with ours, did not forget to bring into the account, the lofty and magnificent names of some gentlemen of those days, don Grumedan, Quedregan, Agesilan, &c. which but to hear sounded, he perceived to be other kind of men, than Pierre, Guillot, and Michel.

Superb and magnificent names of the ancient noblesse.

I am mightily pleased with Jaques Amyot, for leaving throughout a whole French oration the Latin names entire, without varying and garbling them, to give a French cadence. It seemed a little harsh at first: but already custom, by the authority of Plutarch, has overcome it. I have often wished that such as write histories in Latin, would leave our names just as they are; for in making Vaudemont, Vallemontanus, and metamorphosing names to make them more uniform to the Greek or Latin, we know not where we are, nor who the persons were.

Amyot commended for not having Frenchified the Latin names, in his translation of Plutarch.

To conclude: it is a bad custom, and of very ill consequence, that we have in France, of calling every one by the name of his manor, or seigneury, and is the thing in the world that confounds pedigrees the most. A younger brother of a good family, who has had a manor left him, by the name of which he has been known and honoured, cannot handsomely quit the name; ten years after his decease, it goes to a stranger, who does the same: only judge how we shall know these men. We need look no farther for examples than our own royal family, where every partition of estates creates a new surname, whilst, in the mean time, the original of the family is totally lost.

A custom in France, for gentlemen to go by the name of their estates, why blameable.

There is so great liberty taken in these changes, that I have not in my time seen any one advanced by

The obscurest families most



liable to be  
falsified.

fortune to any extraordinary grandeur, who has not presently had genealogical titles added to him, new, and unknown to his father, and who has not been inoculated into some illustrious stem. By good luck, the obscurest families are the most proper for changes. How many gentlemen have we in France, who, by their own account, are of royal extraction? more, I think, than who will confess they are not. Was it not handsomely said by a friend of mine? There were a great many gentlemen assembled together, about the dispute of one lord of a manor with another; which other had, in truth, some pre-eminence, of titles and alliances, above the ordinary class of gentry. Upon the debate, every one aiming to make himself equal to him, alleged one, one extraction; another, another; one the near resemblance of name; another of the coat of arms; another an old worm-eaten patent; and the last pretended to be great-grandson to some foreign king. When they were going to dinner, my friend, instead of taking his place amongst them, retired, with most profound conges entreating the company to excuse him for having hitherto lived with them at the saucy rate of a companion; but being now better informed of their ancient quality, he would begin to pay them the respect due to their degrees, and added, that it did not become him to sit down among so many princes: but he ended the farce with a thousand invectives. "Let us, in God's name, satisfy ourselves with what contented our fathers, and with what we are: we are great enough, if we rightly understand how to maintain our dignity: let us not disown the rank and fortune of our ancestors, but lay aside these ridiculous pretences, that can never be wanting to any one that has the impudence to allege them."

The uncertainty of  
coats of  
arms.

Coats of arms have no more security than surnames. I bear "Azure powdered with trefoils, or, with a lion's paw of the same, armed gules, in fesse." What right have I to appropriate this de-

vice to my family? A son-in-law will transfer it to another family; or some paltry purchaser will make mine his first arms: there is nothing, in short, wherein there is more change and confusion. But this consideration leads me into another field. Let us, in God's name, examine upon what basis we erect this glory and reputation, for which the world is turned topsy-turvy: wherein do we place this renown, that we hunt after with so much trouble? It is, in the end, Peter or William that carries it, takes it into his possession, and whom it only concerns. O! what a courageous faculty is hope, that in a moment proceeds to usurp infinity and immensity, and to supply her master's indigence at her pleasure, with all things he can imagine or desire! Nature has given us this passion for a pretty toy to play with. And this Peter or William, what is it but a sound, when all is said and done? Or three or four strokes of a pen, so easy to be varied, in the first place, that I would fain know to whom is to be attributed the glory of so many victories, to Guesquin, to Glesquin, or to Guaaquin? And yet there would be a much greater probability in this case, than in Lucian, that sigma should serve tau, or S. T. with a process: for

——— *Non levia, aut ludicra petuntur  
Præmia.\**

To do brave acts, who has the noble spirit,  
Slights mean rewards, as things below his merit.

It is no jest: the question is, which of these letters ought to be rewarded for so many sieges, battles, wounds, imprisonments, and services done to the crown of France, by this her famous constable.†

\* Æneid. lib. xii. ver. 764.

† In Froissart's History, where we find all the most memorable actions of this great man, both before and after his advancement to the dignity of constable to his death, he is not named Guesquin, nor Glesquin, nor Guaaquin, but Guesclin. It is true that the same Froissart long after, having mentioned his death, tells us, that having called him by the name of Glesquin, in presence of William d'Ancenis, a gentleman of Brittany, the gentleman said to him,

Nicholas Denisot\* never minded any thing but the letters of his name, of which he has altered the whole contexture to build up, by anagram, the count d'Alsinois, whom he has celebrated with the best of his poetry and painting. And the historian Suetonius was so desirous that his name should carry a meaning, that he cashiered his father's surname Lewis, to leave Tranquillus successor to the reputation of his writings. Who would believe that captain Bayard should have no honour but what he derives from the feats of Peter Terrail? And that Antonio Escalin\* should suffer himself, to his face, to be robbed of the honour of so many navigations and commands at sea and land, by captain Paulin and the baron de la Garde?

Secondly, these are dashes of the pen, common to a thousand people. How many persons are there in all races of the same name and surname? And how

"that Glay Aquin was the right surname of this famous constable," which he proves to him by a very pleasant story, which, however, has all the air of a romance. See Froissart's 3d vol. ch. 75.

\* Born at Mans, in the year 1515.

† To be informed concerning Antonio Escalin, or Iscalin, or rather captain Paulin, called the baron de la Garde, it is necessary to trace the history of France from Francis I. in 1542, to Charles IX. He was a man of fortune, handsome and well set, and bred up by William de Rallay de Langey, governor of the Piedmontese. His family name was Iscalin. M. Wicquefort calls him Anthony Paulin, from Paulin in the Albigeois, where he was born. He is called in M. de Thou's History, Antonius Iscalinus Adhemarus (and oftener Adæmarus), Polinius Garda. He took the name of de la Garde from a corporal of that name, who passing one day through Paudin, with a company of foot soldiers, took a fancy to him, and carried him off with him, to make him his boy. He distinguished himself by his wit, valour, and conduct in the several employments which he had, as general of the galleys, ambassador to the Porte and to England. See his Eulogium in Brantome's Memoirs of Illustrious Men, p. 375, tom. 2, lib. i. ch. 11, of Wicquefort's Ambassador. Gratitude will not permit me to conceal that I am obliged for the greatest part of the memoirs of this person, and the preceding, to an account sent me from Paris, by the learned and obliging M. de la Moynaye, who extracted it from his treasures, at the request of a young nobleman (the count de Caylus), of an illustrious birth, adorned with qualities which are the source and basis of true nobility.

many in different races, ages, and countries? History tells us of three of the name of Socrates, of five Platos, eight Aristotles, seven Xenophons, twenty Demetriuses, and of twenty Theodores; and how many such history was not acquainted with, we may imagine. Who hinders my groom from calling himself Pompey the Great? But after all, what virtue, or what springs are there that fixed upon my deceased groom, or the other Pompey, who had his head cut off in Egypt, this glorious renown, and these so much honoured flourishes of the pen, so as to be of any advantage to them?

*Id cinerem, et manes credis curare sepultos?\**

Can we believe the dead regard such things?

What sense have the two most worthy amongst men; Epaminondas of this glorious verse, that has been so many ages current in his praise?

*Consiliis nostris laus est attrita Lacomum.†*

One Sparta by my counsels is o'erthrown.

Or Africanus of this other?

*A sole exoriente, supra Mæotis Paludes*

*Nemo est, qui factis me æquiparare queat.‡*

From early dawn, unto the setting sun,

No one can match the deeds that I have done.

The survivors, indeed, tickle themselves with these fine words, and being by them incited to jealousy or desire, inconsiderately and fancifully attribute this their sense to the dead: God knows how vainly flattering themselves that they shall one day, in turn, be capable of the same characters: however,

*Ad hæc se*

*Romanus, Grajusque et Barbarus, induperator*

*Erexit; causas discriminis, atque laboris*

*Inde habuit, tanto major famæ sitis est, quàm*

*Virtutis.§*

\* Æneid. lib. iv. ver. 34.

† Idem, lib. v. cap. 7.

‡ Cic. Tusc. Quæst. lib. v. cap. 17.

§ Juvenal, sat. x. ver. 137, &c.

Greek, Roman, and Barbarian chiefs to these,  
Devote their valour and desire of praise,  
And to that greediness of glory owe  
The dangers and fatigues they undergo;  
So much more potent is the thirst of fame  
Than that of virtue.

## CHAPTER XLVII.

### *Of the Uncertainty of our Judgment.*

Whether a  
conquered  
enemy  
should be  
pursued  
to extre-  
mity. Rea-  
sons for  
and against  
it.

IT was well said of the poet :

Ἐπεὶν δὲ πολὺς νόμος ἔνθα καὶ ἔνθα.\*

“ There is every where liberty of arguing,  
“ enough, and enough to be said on both sides.”  
For example :

*Vince Annibal', et non seppa usar' poi  
Ben la vittoriosa sua ventura.†*

The Carthaginian, though renown'd in fight,  
Improv'd not all his victories as he might.

Such as would improve this argument, and condemn the late oversight of our leaders, in not pushing our point at Moncontour ; or accuse the king of Spain‡ of not knowing how to make use of the advantage he had against us at St. Quintin, may conclude these oversights to proceed from a soul already intoxicated with success, or from a stout heart, which being full, and over-gorged with this beginning of good fortune, had lost the appetite of adding to it, having already enough to do to digest what it had taken in. He has his arms full, and can seize no more ; unworthy of the advantage fortune had put into his hands. For what benefit reaps he from it, if, notwithstand-

\* Homer, Iliad xx. ver. 249.

† Vetrar. son. 83.

‡ Philip II. who defeated the French near St. Quintin, the 20th of August, 1556, being St. Lawrence's day.

ing, he give his enemy an opportunity to recover, and make head against him? What hope is there that he will have courage at another time to attack an enemy re-united and armed anew with spite and revenge, who did not dare to pursue him when routed, and dispirited by fear?

*Dum fortuna calet, dum conficit omnia terror.\**

Whilst fortune's in a heat, and terror throws

A dismal gloom, confounding all their foes.

But what better opportunity can he expect, than that which he has lost? It is not here as in fencing, where the most hits gain the prize: for so long as the enemy is on foot, hostilities will be renewed: and that is not to be called a victory, which puts not an end to the war. In the encounter where Cæsar had the worst, near the city of Oricum, he reproached Pompey's soldiers, § that he would have been ruined, had their general known how to overcome; and in his turn he put him to flight, and pursued him. But why may not a man also argue, on the contrary, that it is the effect of a precipitant and insatiable spirit, not to know how to stop its ardour; that it is to abuse the favours of God, to exceed the measure he has prescribed them; that again to throw a man's self into danger, after a victory obtained, is again to expose himself to the mercy of fortune; and that it shows the greatest discretion in the art of war, not to drive an enemy to despair. Sylla and Marius, in their confederate war, having defeated the Marsians, and seeing a body of reserve, that, prompted by despair, was coming on like wild beasts to fall upon them, thought it not convenient to stand their charge. Had not Monsieur de Foix's ardour transported him so precipitantly to pursue the remains of the vanquished at Ravenna, he had not stained the victory by his own death: and yet the recent memory of his example served to preserve Monsieur

\* Lucan. lib. vii. ver. 734.  
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† Plutarch, in the Life of Cæsar, ch. xi.  
2 B

d'Anguien from the same misfortune, at the battle of Serisoles. It is dangerous to attack a man you have deprived of all means to escape, but by his arms; for necessity dictates violent measures: *Gravissimi sunt morsus irritatæ necessitatis*.\* “Enraged necessity bites deep:”

*Vincitur haud gratis jugulo qui provocat hostem.†*

The foe that meets the sword, sells his life dear.

—This it was that made Pharax withhold the king of Lacedæmon, who had defeated the Mantineans,‡ from going to charge a thousand Argians, who were escaped in a body from the defeat; but rather let them steal off at liberty, that he might not encounter valour, whetted and enraged by misfortune. Clodomire, king of Aquitaine, after his victory, pursuing Gondemar, king of Burgundy, who was routed and flying, compelled him to face about, and make head, wherein his obstinacy deprived him of the fruit of his victory, for he there lost his life.

Whether soldiers should be richly armed.

In like manner, if a man were to choose whether he would have his soldiers sumptuously and richly armed, or armed only for necessary defence; this argument would step in, in favour of the first (of which opinion was Sertorius, Philopœmen, Brutus, Cæsar,§ and others), that it always is to a soldier, a spur to his honour and glory, to see himself fine, and withal a motive for him to be more obstinate in fight, having his arms, that are in a manner his estate and inheritance, to defend; which is the reason (says Xenophon) why those of Asia carried their wives, concubines, with their choicest jewels and treasure, along with them to their wars. But then this would also be an argument for the other side, that a general ought rather to render his men careless of life, than to increase their care of preserving it: that, by this means, they will be in a double fear

\* Port. Lat. in Decla.

† Luc. lib. iv. ver. 275.

‡ Diod. Sicul. lib. xii. cap. 25.

§ Suetonius, in the Life of Cæsar, sect. 67.

of hazarding their persons, as it will spirit up the enemy to fight with greater resolution, where so rich spoils are to be obtained by the victory: and this very thing has been observed, in former times, wonderfully to encourage the Romans against the Samnites. Antiochus, showing Hannibal the army he had raised against them, splendid, and rich, in all sorts of equipage, asked him, "If the Romans would be satisfied with this army?" "Satisfied," replied the other, "Yes, doubtless, were their avarice ever so great." Lycurgus not only forbade his soldiers to be sumptuous in their equipage, but to strip their conquered enemies, being desirous (as he said) that poverty and frugality should shine with the rest of the battle.

At sieges, and elsewhere, where occasion draws us near to the enemy, we willingly suffer our men to brave, insult, and affront the enemy, with all sorts of injurious language; and not without some colour of reason: for it is of no little consequence to take from them all hopes of mercy and composition, in representing to them, that there is no favour to be expected from an enemy they have so incensed, nor other remedy left, but in a victory. And yet Vitellius\* found himself herein deceived; for having to do with Otho, weaker in the valour of his soldiers long unaccustomed to war, and rendered effeminate with the delights of the city, he so nettled them, at last, with injurious language, reproaching them with cowardice, and the regret of the mistresses and entertainments they had left behind at Rome, that, by this means, he inspired them with a resentment, which no exhortation could produce; and himself drew them upon his back, whom their own captains before could not push upon him. And, indeed, when they are injuries that touch to the quick, it may very well fall out, that he who went but coolly

\* Or rather his lieutenants, who commanded in his absence. See Plutarch's Life of Otho, ch. 3.



to work in the behalf of his prince, will proceed with another temper when the quarrel is his own.

Whether  
generals  
ought to  
disguise  
themselves  
before a  
battle.

To consider of how great importance is the preservation of the general of an army, and that the aim of an enemy is levelled directly at the head upon which all others depend; the advice seems to admit of no dispute, which we know has been taken by so many great captains, of changing their habit, and disguising their persons, upon the point of a battle. Nevertheless, the inconvenience a man, by so doing, runs into, is not less than that which he thinks to avoid: for the general being, by this means, concealed from the knowledge of his own men, the courage they might derive from his presence and example, happens, by degrees, to fail; and not seeing the wonted marks and ensigns of their leader,\* they presently conclude him either dead, or that, despairing of the day, he is gone to shift for himself; and experience declares, that both these ways have been successful at times. What befel Pyrrhus, in his battle with the consul Levinus in Italy, will serve us to both purposes; for though, by disguising his person under the armour of Demogacles,† and making him wear his own, he indeed saved his own life; yet by that very means, he was very near running into the other mischief, of losing the battle. Alexander, Cæsar, and Lucullus, loved to make themselves known in a battle, by rich accoutrements, and armour of a particular lustre and colour: Agis, Agesilaus, and that great Gilippus,‡

\* As at the battle of Ivry, in the person of Henry the Great.

† Or rather Megacles, as may be seen in Plutarch's Life of Pyrrhus, ch. 8.

‡ It is my opinion that one who has been forced to fly his country from a sentence of death, for having robbed the public, can never deserve the title of a great man. As to the infamous robbery committed by this Gilippus, see Diodorus of Sicily, lib. xiii. ch. 33, translated by Amyot. His father, whose name was Clearchus, was in the same scrape. Being cast for his life, he fled, says Diodorus, before the sentence. Thus, adds the historian, did these two personages, who in other respects were both reputed excellent men, throw a scandal upon the rest of their lives and actions, by suffering themselves to be corrupted with sordid avarice.

on the contrary, used to fight in obscure armour, and without any princely attire.

Amongst other oversights with which Pompey is charged,\* at the battle of Pharsalia, he is condemned for making his army stand still to receive the enemy; by reason that (I shall here use Plutarch's own words, which are better than mine) it slackens the violent impression which the motion of running gives to the first blow, and hinders that clashing of the combatants, one against another, which used to fill them, more than any thing, with great impetuosity and fury, on the first encounter, especially when they rush in upon one another with vigour, increasing their courage by the shouts and the career, rendering the soldiers' ardour, as one may say, more cool and firm. This is what he says on this side of the question; but if Cæsar had come by the worse, why might it not as well have been urged by another, on the contrary, that the strongest and most steady posture of fighting, is that wherein a man stands planted firm, without motion; and that he who makes a halt upon a march, by confining and reserving his force within himself for an occasion, has a great advantage against him who is shocked, and who has already spent half his breath in running on to the charge? Besides, that an army being a body made up of so many different parts, it is impossible for it to move, in such fury, with so exact a motion, as not to disturb or break the order of battle, and to hinder the most forward men from being engaged, before their associates can relieve them. In that unnatural battle between the two Persian brothers, Clearchus, the Lacedæmonian, who commanded the Greeks of Cyrus's party, led them on in fine order, and without hurry, to the charge; but coming within fifty paces, put them upon full speed, hoping, in so short a career, to keep them both in

Whether  
best to fall  
upon an  
enemy, or  
to wait for  
an attack.

\* It is Cæsar himself that lays this blame on Pompey. *De Bello Civili*, lib. iii. cap. 17.

order and breath, and, at the same time, giving the advantage of impetuosity both to their persons and their missile arms; others have settled the point thus: if your enemy come running upon you, stand firm to receive him; if he stand firm to receive you, run full drive upon him.\*

Whether  
it is best  
for a prince  
to wait for  
his enemy  
in his own  
territory,  
or to go  
and attack  
him upon  
his terri-  
tory.

In the expedition of the emperor Charles the Fifth into Provence, king Francis might have chosen, either to meet him in Italy, or to expect him in his own dominions; wherein, though he considered of how great advantage it was to keep his own territories clear from the troubles of war, to the end that his strength being entire, he might continually supply men and money at need; that the necessity of war requires, at every turn, to spoil and waste the country which cannot well be done upon one's own; and that the country people do not easily digest such havoc by those of their own party, as from an enemy, so that seditions and commotions might, by such means, be kindled amongst us; that the licence of pillage and plunder (which are not to be tolerated at home) is a great ease to the sufferings of war; and that he who has no other prospect of gain, than his bare pay, will hardly be kept upon duty, when but two steps from his wife, and his own house: that he who lays the cloth, is ever at the charge of the feast; that there is more alacrity in attacking than defending; and that the shock of the loss of a battle in our own territories, is so violent, as to endanger the dissolution of the whole body politic, there being no passion so contagious, or that so easily gains ground, as fear; and that the citizens who should hear the rattle of the tempest at their gates, which should receive their captains and soldiers, yet trembling and out of breath, would be in danger, in this combustion, to precipitate themselves upon some untoward resolution; notwithstanding all this, he chose to recall the forces he had beyond the mountains, and to

\* Plutarch, in the Precepts of Marriage, sect. 34.

wait for the enemy. For he might, on the other hand, imagine, that being at home, and amongst his friends, he could not fail of plenty of all manner of conveniences : the rivers and passes of which he was master, would bring in both provisions and money safe, without the trouble of convey ; that he should find his subjects the more affectionate to him, the nearer the danger was ; that having so many cities and barriers to secure him, it would be in his power to hasten or delay battle as he saw fit ; and if the latter pleased him, that he might, under covert, and at his own ease, see his enemy founder, and defeat himself with the difficulties he was certain to encounter in an enemy's country ; where, before, behind, and on every side, war would be made upon him, and where he would have, in case of a sickness in his army, no means to refresh himself, to enlarge his quarters, or to lodge his wounded men in safety : no money, no victuals, but what he fights for ; no leisure to halt and take breath, no knowledge of the ways or country, to secure him from ambushes and surprises ; and, in case of losing a battle, no possible means of saving the remains. Neither is there want of examples in both these cases.

Scipio thought it much better to go and attack his enemy's territories in Africa, than to stay at home to defend his own, and to fight him in Italy, where he was ; and it succeeded well with him : but, on the contrary, Hannibal, in the same war, ruined himself by abandoning the conquest of a foreign country, to go and defend his own. The Athenians, having left the enemy in their own dominions, to go over into Sicily, were not favoured by fortune ; but Agathocles, king of Syracuse, found her favourable to him, when he went over into Africa, and left the war at home. So that the common observation is just, that events, especially in war, for the most part, depend upon fortune, who will not be governed by, nor submit to, human prudence : according to the poet :

Instances  
for and a-  
gainst the  
question.

*Et male consultis pretium est, prudentia fallax,  
Nec fortuna probat causas sequiturque merentes :  
Sed vaga per cunctos nullo discrimine fertur.  
Scilicet est aliud quod non cogatque, regatque,  
Majus, et in proprias ducat mortalia leges.\**

Prudence deceitful and uncertain is,  
Ill counsels sometimes hit, where good ones miss ;  
Though fortune sometimes the best cause approves,  
Adverse, and wildly she as often roves.  
So that some greater and more constant cause,  
Rules and subjects all mortals to its laws.

But, to take the thing right, it should seem that our counsels and deliberations depend as much upon fortune, as on ourselves ; and that she engages our very reasoning in her uncertainty and confusion. We argue rashly and adventurously, says Timæus in Plato,† by reason that as well as ourselves, our arguments are greatly subject to chance.

## CHAPTER XLVIII.

### *Of the War Horses called Destriers.*

The horses  
Destriers,  
why so  
called.

BEHOLD I am become a grammarian ; I who never learned any language but by rote, and who do not yet know adjective, conjunction, or ablative. I think I have read, that the Romans had a sort of horses, called *Funales*, or *Dextrarios*, which were either led-horses, or horses laid in at several stages, to be taken fresh upon occasion ; and thence it is, that we call our horses of service, Destriers : and our romances commonly use the phrase of a Roman, *destrer* for *accompagner*, to accompany. They also called *Desultorios equos* those horses which were so trained, that running full speed, side by side, without bridle or saddle, the Roman gentle-

Horses to  
change in  
the midst  
of a race.

\* Manil. Astron. lib. iv. ver. 85, &c.

† Plato, in Timæus, p. 528.

men, armed at all points, would shift, and throw themselves from the one to the other, in the midst of the race. The Numidian gens d' arms had always a led-horse in one hand, besides that they rode upon, to change in the heat of battle: *Quibus, desultorum in modum, binos trahentibus equos, inter acerrimam sæpe pugnam in recentem equum ex fesso armatis, transultare, mos erat. Tanta velocitas ipsis, tamque docile equorum genus.\** "Whose custom was, leading along two horses, after the manner of the Desultorii, armed as they were, in the heat of fight, to vault from a tired horse to a fresh one; so active were the men, and so docile the horses." There are many horses trained up to help their riders, so as to run upon any one that appears with a drawn sword, to fall both with mouth and heels upon any that front or oppose them: but it often falls out, that they do more harm to their friends than their enemies; besides that you cannot loose them from their hold, to reduce them again into order, when they are once engaged; by which means you remain at the mercy of their quarrel. Artibius, general of the Persian army, fighting, man to man, with Onesilus, king of Salamis, and being mounted upon a horse trained after this manner, it proved the occasion of his death; Onesilus's armour-bearer cleaving him down with a falchion between the shoulders,† as the horse was reared up against his master. And if it be true what the Italians report, that in the battle of Fournoue,‡ king Charles's

\* Liv. lib. xxiii. cap. 29.

† Herodot. lib. v. ver. 376.

‡ In the narrative which Philip de Comines has given of this battle, in which he himself was present (lib. viii. ch. 6), he tells us of wonderful performances by the horse on which the king was mounted. The name of the horse was Savoy, and it was the most beautiful horse he had ever seen. During the battle the king was personally attacked when he had nobody near him but a valet de chambre, a little fellow, and not well armed. "The king," says Philip de Comines, "had the best horse under him in the world, and therewith he stood his ground bravely, till a number of his men, not a great way from him, arrived at the critical minute when the

horse, with kicking and prancing, disengaged his master from the enemy, that pressed upon him, otherwise he had been killed; it is certain he ran a very great hazard.

The horses  
of the Ma-  
malukes,  
very dex-  
trous.

The Mamelukes boast, that they have the most dextrous horses of any cavalry in the world; that, by nature and custom, they are formed to know and distinguish the enemy, whom they fall foul upon with teeth and heels, according to a word or sign given: as also to gather up, with their mouths, darts and lances scattered upon the field, and present them to their riders, on the word of command.

Cæsar and  
Pompey  
good horse-  
men.

It is said, both of Cæsar and Pompey the Great, that, amongst their other qualities, they were excellent horsemen; and particularly of Cæsar,\* that in his youth, being mounted on a horse, without saddle or bridle, he made him perform all his paces with his hands behind him.

Alexan-  
der's horse.

As nature designed to make of this personage, and of Alexander, two miracles of military art, so one would say, she had done her utmost to train them after an extraordinary manner: for every one knows, that Alexander's horse Bucephalus, had a head inclining to the shape of a bull, that he would suffer himself to be mounted and governed by none but his master, and that he was so honoured after his death, as to have a city built after his name.

Cæsar's  
horse.

Cæsar had also another, which had fore feet like those of a man, and a hoof divided in the form of toes; which was not to be ridden, mounted, or managed, by any but Cæsar himself; who, after its death, dedicated its statue to the goddess Venus.†

Riding a  
very whole-  
some exer-  
cise.

I do not willingly alight when I am once on horse-back; for it is the place where, whether well or sick,

"Italians ran away." This does not seem very contradictory to what the Italians say, that had it not been for his horse, king Charles would have been lost.

\* Plutarch, in the Life of Julius Cæsar, ch. 5 of Amyot's translation.

† Sueton. in Cæsar's Life, sect. 61.

I find myself most at ease. Plato recommends it for health; and Pliny says, it is good for the stomach and the joints.\*

We read in Xenophon, of a law, forbidding any one who had a horse, to travel on foot. Trogus and Justinus say, that the Parthians used not only to make war, but to manage all affairs, whether public or private, make bargains, confer, treat, take the air, and all on horseback; and that the greatest distinction between freemen and slaves amongst them, was, that the former rode all on horseback, and the latter went on foot:† an institution of which Cyrus was the founder.

There are several examples in the Roman history (and Suetonius more particularly observes it of Cæsar) of captains, who, on pressing occasions, commanded their cavalry to alight, by that means to take from them all hopes of running away, as also for the advantage they hoped for, by fighting in this manner. *Quo haud dubiè superat Romanus*: "Where-  
" in the Romans," says Livy,‡ "did undoubtedly  
" excel:" however, the first thing they did to keep the people newly conquered in awe, was to take from them their arms and horses: and, therefore, it is that we so often meet in Cæsar, *Arma proferri, jumenta produci, obsides dari jubet*:§ "He commanded the  
" arms to be surrendered, the horses brought out,  
" and hostages to be given." The grand seignior, to this day, suffers not a Christian or a Jew to keep a horse of his own, throughout his empire.

Our ancestors, especially at the time they had war with the English, in all their engagements and pitched battles fought for most part on foot,|| that they might have nothing but their own force, courage, and strength to trust to, where life and honour were at stake. You trust (whatever Chrysantes in Xenophon says to the contrary) your valour, and

\* Lib. xxviii. cap. 4.

† Justin's Hist. lib. xii.

‡ Liv. lib. ix. cap. 22.

§ Cæsar's Com. de Bello Gallico, lib. vii.

|| See Froissart,



your fortune, to that of your horse ; his wounds and death bring your person into the same danger ; his fear or fury shall make you reputed rash or cowardly ; if he is headstrong or resty, your honour must answer it : and therefore do not think it strange, that those battles I spoke of above, were more obstinate and furious than those that are fought on horseback :

——— *Cedebant pariter, paritèrque ruebant  
Victiores victique ; neque his fuga nota, neque illis.\**

The furious hosts alike their weapons ply,  
Alike they fell, alike they scorn'd to fly.

Their battles were much better disputed : now-a-days there are nothing but routs ; *Primus clamor, atque impetus rem decernit* : “ The first shout, or “ the first charge, puts an end to the business.” And the arms we choose to make use of in so great a hazard, should be as much as possible at our own command : wherefore I would advise to choose the shortest sort, and such for which we can best answer. We may, one would think, rely more on a sword in the hand than on a bullet from a pistol, wherein there must be a concurrence of several things, to make it perform its office, the powder, the flint, and the lock, if any of which fail, it endangers your fortune : a man is not sure to hit, whose aim is directed by air :

*Et quò ferre velint permittere vulnèra ventis,  
Ensis habet vires, et gens quæcunque virorum est  
Bella gerit gladiis.†*

——— Far off with bows  
They shoot, and where it lists the wind bestows  
Their wounds ; but fight of sword does strength require,  
All manly nations the sword-fight desire.‡

But of that weapon I shall speak more fully, when I come to compare the arms of the ancients with ours. And setting aside the astonishment of the ear, which

\* Virg. *Æneid.* lib. x. ver. 576.

† Lucan. lib. viii. ver. 384.

‡ Mr. May's translation.

yet every one grows familiar with in a little time, I look upon it as a weapon of very little execution, and hope we shall one day quite lay it aside.

That missile weapon which the Italians formerly made use of both with fire and without, was much more terrible: they called a certain kind of javelin, armed at the point with an iron spear three feet long, that it might pierce through and through an armed man, phalarica. This they sometimes, in field service, darted by hand; sometimes from engines for the defence of places besieged; the shaft of it being rolled round with flax, pitched and oiled, took fire in its flight, and lighting upon the body of a man, or his target, took away all the use of arms and limbs. And yet coming to close fight, I should think it would also disable the assailant, and that the camp, being as it were covered with these flaming truncheons, would produce a common inconvenience to both armies:

The use of the phalarica, a weapon of the ancient Italians.

————— *Magnum stridens contorta phalarica venit,  
Fulminis acta "odo" ————.\**

————— The phalarica when shot off does fly,  
With a huge noise, like thunder, through the sky.

They had, likewise, other inventions (which will seem incredible to us who have not tried them), whereby they supplied the want of our powder and shot. They threw their darts with such violence, as oftentimes transfixt two targets, and two armed men at once, and pinned them together. Neither were their slings less certain of execution, or of shorter carriage: *Saxis globosis funda, mare apertum incessantes: Coronas modici circuli magno ex intervallo loci assueti trajicere: non capita modo hostium vulnerabant, sed quem locum destinasse oris:*† “Cul-  
“ling round stones from the shore for their slings;  
“and with them practising at a great distance, they

\* Virg. *Æneid.* ix. ver. 705, &c.

† Liv. lib. xxxviii. cap. 29.

“ not only wounded an enemy in the head, but hit any other part at pleasure.” Their battering pieces did not only the execution, but also imitated the thunder, of our cannon : *Ad ictus mœnium cum terribili sonitu editos, pavor et trepidatio cœpit* :\* “ At the battering of the walls, which is performed with a dreadful noise, the defendants began to fear and tremble.” The Gauls, our kinsmen in Asia, abominated these treacherous missile arms, it being their practice to fight with greater bravery, hand to hand. *Non tam patentibus plagis moventur.—Ubi latior, quam altior, plaga est, etiam gloriosius se pugnare putant : iidem quum aculeus sagittæ aut glandis abditiæ introrsus tenui vulnere in speciem urit : tùm in rabiem et pudorem tam parvæ perimentis pestis versi, prosternunt corpora humi* :† “ They are not so much concerned at large wounds ; when a wound is wider than deep, they think they fight with greater glory : but when they receive a small wound, with the point of an arrow, or some small bullet, then, transported with fury and shame to perish by so mean an instrument of death, they fall to the ground ;” a description this, very like a harquebuss shot. The ten thousand Greeks, in their long and famous retreat, met with a nation who very much galled them with great and strong bows, shooting arrows so long, that taking them up again, one might return them back like a dart, and therewith pierce a buckler and an armed man, through and through. The engines of Dionysius’s invention at Syracuse, to throw vast massy darts, and stones of a prodigious bulk, with so great impetuosity, and to so great a distance, came very near to our modern inventions. But, in this discourse of horses and horsemanship, we are not to forget the pleasant posture of one Maistre Pierre Pol, a doctor of divinity, upon his mule, which Monstrelet reports he

\* Liv. lib. xxxviii. cap. 5.

† Idem. ibid. cap. 21.

always rode with both legs aside, through the streets of Paris, like a woman. He says also, elsewhere,\* that the Gascons had terrible horses, that would wheel about in their full speed, which the French, Picards, Dutch, and Brabanters thought very miraculous, having not seen the like before. Cæsar speaking of the Swedes;† In the charges they make on horseback, says he,‡ they often throw themselves off to fight on foot, having taught their horses not to stir in the mean time from the place, to which they presently run again upon occasion; and, according to their custom, nothing is so unmanly and so base, as to use saddles, or pads, and they despise such as make use of those conveniences: insomuch that being but a very few in number, they fear not to attack a great many.

That which I have formerly wondered at, to see a horse made to perform all his exercise, with a switch only, and the reins upon his neck, was common with the Massilians, who rode their horses without saddle or bridle:

The Massilians, a people of Africa, ride on horses without saddle or bridle.

*Et gens quæ nudo residens Massilia dorso,  
Ora levi flectit, frænorum nescia virga,  
Et Numidæ infræni cingunt. §*

Massilians, who unsaddled horses ride,  
And with a switch their fiery coursers guide,  
The fierce Numidians too, with steeds unbound,  
Join'd in a body, and begirt us round.

\* Vol. i. cap. 66, where, to the Gascons, Monstrelet adds the Lombards, whom Montaigne forgot or omitted on purpose, says the historian, to do the more honour to his countrymen, the Gascons; which whosoever will, may believe, but I cannot prevail with myself to suspect him of such an artifice.

† Read Suabians, a people of Germany, whom Cæsar expressly calls Suevorum Genus. Sweden was not known to the Romans in Cæsar's time, which it is likely Montaigne knew very well. The word Swedes therefore must be an error of the press, an error which, however, I have found in all the editions of this book, which I could possibly consult, as well as in the English translation.

‡ Cæsar's Comment. lib. iv. de Bello Gallico.

§ Lucan, lib. iv. ver. 682, 683. Virg. Æneid, lib. iv. ver. 41.

*Equi sine frænis, deformis ipse cursus, rigida cervice, et extento capite currentium.\** “The career of a horse without a bridle, is disagreeable, while he carries his neck stiff, and his nose in the air.”

To ride on mules honourable or dishonourable in different countries.

King Alphonso, who first instituted the order of knights of the sash or scarf, in Spain, amongst other rules gave them this, that they should never ride mule or mulet, upon penalty of a mark of silver; as I lately read in Guevara's Letters, of which, whoever gave them the title of golden epistles, had another kind of opinion than I have.† The courtier says that, till his time, it was a disgrace to a gentleman to ride one of these creatures: but the Abyssines, on the contrary, as they are nearer advanced to the person of Prester John, affect to be mounted upon large mules, for the sake of pomp and dignity.

The furious horses of the Assyrians.

Xenophon tells us, that the Assyrians were fain to keep their horses fettered in the stable, they were so fierce and vicious; and that it required so much time to loose and to harness them, that to avoid any disorder this delay might bring upon them, in case of surprise by the enemy, they never lay in their camp, till it was fortified with ditches and ramparts. His Cyrus, who was so great a master of horsemanship, kept his horses from their ordinary allowance, and never suffered them to have any thing to eat till they had earned it by the sweat of some exercise.

The blood and urine of horses serve for nourishment in case of need.

The Scythians, when in the field, and in scarcity of provisions, used to draw blood from their horses, which they drank, both for thirst and nourishment:

*Venit et epoto Sarmata pastus equo.†*

\* Liv. lib. xxxv. cap. 11.

† You will find, at the article *Guevara*, in Bayle's Dictionary, that, from the over fondness of some Frenchmen for Guevara's Letters, the whole French nation has been reproached with it, a groundless reflection, as all those commonly are which tend to blacken whole nations. According to this fine way of reasoning, we have the honour of France repaired now by the opinion of Montaigne, who sets little value upon Guevara's Letters.

† Mart. lib. iii. ver. 4.

Hither the Scythian also steers his course,  
Gorg'd with the juices of his bleeding horse.

Those of Crete being besieged by Metellus,\* were in so great necessity for drink, that they were fain to quench their thirst with their horses' urine.

To show how much cheaper the Turkish armies How the Turkish armies subsist. support themselves than ours, besides that the soldiers drink nothing but water, and eat nothing but rice and salt-flesh minced (of which every one easily carries with him a month's provision), they know how to feed upon the blood of their horses, as well as the Muscovites and Tartars, and salt it.

Those new discovered people of the Indies, when the Spaniards first landed amongst them, had so much esteem'd by the Americans as the Spaniards themselves, great an opinion both of the men and horses, that they looked upon them as Gods, or as animals ennobled above their nature. And some of them, after they were subdued, coming to sue for peace, with presents of gold and provisions, failed not to make an offer of the same to the horses, with the same kind of harangue to the animals they had made to the men; interpreting their neighing, for a language of truce and friendship. In the Indies, on this side the Ganges, to ride upon an elephant was the royal and chief honour, the second to ride in a coach with four horses, the third to ride upon a camel, and the last and meanest, to be carried or drawn by one horse only. One of our late writers tells us, that he has seen countries in that climate, where they ride upon oxen, with saddles, stirrups, and bridles, and very much at their ease. Quintus Fabius Maximus Rutilianus,† in a battle with the Samnites, seeing his cavalry, after three or four charges, had failed of breaking into the enemy's battalion, made them unbridle their horses, and spur them with all their mettle; so that having nothing to check their career,‡ through

\* Valer. Maxim. lib. vii. ch. 6. In Externis, sect. 1.

† Or rather Rullianus. Tit. Liv. lib. vii. cap. 30.

‡ Idem. *ibid.* *ibid.*

weapons and men overturned, they might open the way for his foot, who, by that means, gained a complete but bloody victory. The same command was given by Quintus Fulvius Flaccus, against the Celtiberians: *Id cum majore vi equorum facietis, si effrenatos in hostes equos immittatis: quod sæpe Romanos equites cum laude fecisse memoriae proditum est. Detractisque frenis his ultro citroque cum magna strage hostium, infractis omnibus hastis, transcurrerunt*.\* “Your horses will be of greater service to you, if you spur them unbridled upon the enemy, as it is recorded the Roman horses, to their great glory, have often done. Accordingly, their bridles being pulled off, they charged through and through the enemy, with a great slaughter, without breaking their spears.”

Mare's milk the delight of the Tartars.

The duke of Muscovy† was anciently obliged to pay this reverence to the Tartars, that when they sent an embassy to him, he went out on foot to meet them, and presented them with a goblet of mare's milk (a favourite beverage of theirs), and if, in drinking, a drop fell by chance upon the manes of their horses, he was bound to lick it off with his tongue.

The army that Bajazet had sent into Russia, was overwhelmed with so dreadful a storm of snow, that, to shelter and preserve themselves from starving with the cold, many killed and ripped out the bowels of their horses, to creep into their bellies, and enjoy their warmth. Bajazet, after that furious battle, in 1401, wherein he was overthrown by Tamerlane, was in a hopeful way of escaping, by the fleetness of an Arabian mare he had under him, had he not been constrained to let her drink her fill at the fording a brook, which rendered her so faint and dull, that he was afterwards easily taken by his pursuers. They

\* Liv. lib. xl. ch. 40.

† See the Chronicle of Muscovy, by Peter Petrejus, a Swede, printed in High Dutch, at Leipsic, in 1620, in 4to. part ii. p. 159. This species of slavery began about the middle of the thirteenth century, and lasted near 260 years.

say, indeed, that to let a horse stale, takes him off his mettle; but I should rather have thought that drinking would recruit him. Croesus, marching his army over certain commons, near Sardis, met with a great number of serpents, which the horses devoured with a great appetite, and which, Herodotus says,\* was an ill omen to his affairs. We call a horse *cheval entier* that has his mane and ears entire, and no others will pass muster.

The Lacedæmonians having defeated the Athenians in Sicily, and returning triumphant from the victory into the city of Syracuse, amongst other insolences, caused all the horses they had taken to be clipped and led in triumph. Alexander fought with a nation called Dææ; a people whose discipline it was to march two and two together, armed on horseback, to battle; during which, one always alighted, and so they fought, one while on horseback, and another on foot, each after the other by turns. I do not think that for skill, and graceful riding, any nation in the world excels the French; though a good horseman, according to our way of speaking, seems rather to respect the courage of the man, than his address in riding. Of all that ever I saw the most knowing in that art, I think he that had the best seat, and the best method in breaking horses, was Monsieur de Carnavalet, who served our king Henry II.

I have seen a man gallop, standing with both his feet upon the saddle, take off the saddle, and at his return take it up again, refit it, and remount himself, riding all the while full speed; and having galloped over a bonnet, making very good shots backwards at it with his bow, take up any thing from the ground, setting one foot on the ground, and keeping the other in the stirrup; with other such monkey-tricks, by which he got his living. There have been seen, in my time, at Constantinople, two men upon one horse, who, in the height of his speed, would throw

Horses  
clipped to  
be led in  
triumph.

Instances  
of the won-  
derful dex-  
terity of  
riders.

\* Lib. i. p. 35.



themselves off, and into the saddle again by turns; and one who bridled and saddled his horse with nothing but his teeth. Another, who between two horses, one foot upon one saddle, and another upon the other, carrying a person upon his shoulders, would ride full speed, the other standing bolt upright upon him, making very sure shots with his bow. Several, who would ride full speed with their heels upwards, and their heads upon the saddle, between several scymitars, with the points upward, fixed in the harness. When I was a boy, the prince of Sulmone breaking a rough horse at Naples to all his airs, fixed reals to his knees and toes, as if they had been nailed there, to show the firmness of his seat,

## CHAPTER XLIX,

### *Of Ancient Customs.*

I SHOULD willingly pardon our people for admitting no other pattern or rule of perfection, than their own peculiar manners and customs; it being a common vice, not of the vulgar only, but almost of all men, to walk in the path which their ancestors have trod before them: I am content when they see Fabricius or Lelius, that they look upon their countenance and behaviour as barbarous, seeing they are neither clothed nor fashioned according to our mode. But I find fault with their singular indiscretion, who suffer themselves to be so imposed upon by authority of the present practice, as every month to alter their opinion, if custom so require, and that they should so vary their judgment of themselves. When they wore the belly-pieces of their doublets up as high as their breasts, they stiffly maintained that they were in their proper place: some years after they were slipped down between their thighs, and then they

The French  
very  
changeable  
in their  
dress.

could laugh at the former fashion as foolish and intolerable. The fashion now in use, makes them absolutely condemn the ancient mode, with so great resolution and so universal contempt, that a man would think there was a certain kind of madness amongst them, that makes such a whirligig of their understanding. Now seeing that our change of fashions is so prompt and sudden, that the inventions of all the tailors in the world cannot furnish out new whim-whams enough; those that were cast off will necessarily often come again in vogue, and even those soon fall into the same contempt; and the same judgment will, in the space of fifteen or twenty years, take up two or three, not only different but contrary opinions, with an incredible lightness and inconstancy: there is not any of us so cunning, that suffers not himself to be gulled with this contradiction, and both his external and internal sight to be insensibly blinded.

I will here muster up some old customs that I have in memory, some of them the same with ours, the others different, to the end that bearing in mind this continual variation of human things, we may have our judgment clearer, and more firm. Our way of fighting with a rapier and short cloak, was in practice amongst the Romans also, *Sinistris sagis involvant, gladiosque dstringunt*.\* “They wrapped their cloaks round the left arm, and handled the sword with the right,” says Cæsar; and I observe there has been a vicious custom in our nation, from that time to this,† which is to stop passengers we meet upon the road, to compel them to give an account who they are, what news they hear, and to take it for an affront, and cause of quarrel, if they will not tell us.

At the bath,‡ which the ancients made use of every day before they went to dinner, and as frequently as we wash our hands, they at first only

The practice of the ancient Romans to fight with rapier and cloak.

The ancients bathed every day

\* Cæsar de Bello Civili, lib. i. † Idem, lib. iv. ‡ Sen. ep. 86.

before dis-  
ser.

bathed their arms and legs ; but afterwards, and by a custom that has continued for many ages in most nations of the world, they bathed the whole body in mixed and perfumed waters, looking upon it as a great simplicity to bathe in simple water : the most delicate and affected perfumed themselves all over, three or four times a day.\* They often caused their hair to be pinched off their bodies, as the women of France have, for some time past, accustomed to do from their foreheads :

*Quod pectus, quod crura tibi, quod brachia vellis.†*

How thou dost twitch thy breast, thy arms, and thighs !

They perfumed their bodies, and twitched off their hairs, though they had ointments proper for that purpose, and sometimes they painted with a bit of chalk, after being steeped in vinegar :

*Psilotro nitet, aut arida latet abdita creta.‡*

They delighted to lie soft, and considered it as a great token of hardness to lie upon a mattress.§

They did  
eat on their  
beds.

They used to eat lying upon beds, much after the manner of the Turks in this age :

*Inde toro pater Æneas sic orsus ab alto.¶*

Then thus Æneas, from his bed of state,  
Begun Troy's woeful story to relate.

It is said of the younger Cato, that after the battle of Pharsalia, having contracted a melancholy disposition, at the ill posture of the public affairs, he took his repast always sitting, assuming an austere course of life.

How they  
paid their  
respects to  
their great  
men.

It was also their custom to kiss the hands of great persons, by way of honouring and caressing them ; and, meeting with their equals, they always kissed each other in salutation, as do the Venetians :

\* Sen. ep. 86.

† Mart. lib. ii. epig. 62, ver. 1.

‡ Idem, lib. vi. epig. 93, ver. 9.

§ "Laudare solebat Attalus culcitram quæ resisteret corpori."

"Tali utor etiam senex," says Seneca, ep. 108.

¶ Æneid. lib. ii. ver. 2.

*Gratulusque darem cum dulcibus oscula verbis.\**

And kindest words I would with kisses mix.

In petitioning, or saluting any great man, they used to lay their hands upon his knees. Pasicles, the philosopher, and brother of Crates,† instead of carrying his hand to the knee, laid it upon his cod-piece; and being rudely repulsed by him to whom he made that indecent compliment, "What," said he, "is not that part your own as well as the other?" They used to eat their fruits, as we do, when dinner was over.

They wiped their arses (let the delicate ladies <sup>What use they made of a</sup> mince it as they please) with a sponge, which is the reason that *spongia* is a smutty word in Latin; <sup>sponge.</sup> which sponge was also fastened to the end of a stick, as appears by the story of him, who, as he was led along to be thrown to the wild beasts in the sight of the people, asking leave to do his business,‡ and having no other way to dispatch himself, forced the sponge and stick down his own throat, and choked himself. They used to deterge the arse, after coition, with perfumed wool:

*At tibi nil faciam, sed lota mentula lana.§*

They used, in the cross streets of Rome, to place certain vessels and little tubs for passengers to piss in:

*Pusi sæpe lacum propter, se ac dolia curia,  
Somno devincti credunt, extollere vestem.||*

Boys dream of pissing in the tub or lake,  
And find themselves bepiss'd when they awake.

They made a collation between meals, and had in summer those who sold snow to cool their wine: and <sup>They cool-  
ed their</sup> some there were who made use of snow in winter, <sup>wine with  
snow.</sup>

\* Ovid de Pont. lib. iv. eleg. 9, ver. 13.

† Diog. Laert. in the Life of Crates, lib. vi. sect. 89.

‡ Senec. ep. 70.

§ Mart. lib. xi. epig. 59, ver. 11.

|| Lucret. lib. iv. ver. 1020.

not thinking their wine cool enough even then.\* The men of quality had their cupbearers, and carvers, and their buffoons to make them sport.

They had portable kitchens.

They had their meat served up in winter upon a sort of chafing-dishes; which were set upon the table, and had portable kitchens (of which I myself have seen some) wherein all their service was carried after them :

*Has vobis epulas habete, lauti :*  
*Nos offendimur ambulante cœna.†*

These feasts, how much soever you commend,  
Your walking suppers greatly us offend.

Fish-pools in their lower rooms.

In summer they had a contrivance to bring fresh and clear streams of water through lower rooms, wherein were great store of living fish, which the guests took out with their own hands to be dressed, every man according to his own taste. Fish has ever had this pre-eminence, and keeps it still, that the great men all pretend to be skilled in dressing them, and indeed the taste is more delicate than that of flesh, at least to me. In all sorts of magnificence, debauchery, and voluptuous inventions of effeminacy and expense, we do in truth all we can to equal them, for our wills are as corrupt as theirs : but we cannot come up to them ; nor are we more able to reach them in their vicious, than in their virtuous qualities ; for both the one and the other proceed from a vigour of mind, which was without comparison greater in them than in us : and by how much the weaker the mind is, so much the less power has it to do much good or harm.

The most honourable place at table among the Romans.

The highest place of honour amongst them was the middle ; the name going before, and that following after, either in writing or speaking, had no signification of grandeur, as is evident by their

\* At Montpellier many people drink ice in the winter, even to this day.

† Mart. lib. vii. epig. 47, ver. 4, 5.

writings; they will as soon say Oppius and Cæsar, as Cæsar and Oppius, and me and thee, as thee and me. This made me formerly take notice, in the Life of Flaminius,\* in our French Plutarch, of one passage, where it seems as if the author, speaking of the jealousy of honour between the Ætolians and Romans, about the winning of a battle, which they had with their joint forces obtained, made it of some importance, that in the Greek songs, they had put the Ætolians before the Romans; if there be no ambiguity in the words of the French translations.

The ladies, in their baths, made no scruple of admitting men amongst them, and moreover made use of their serving men to rub and anoint them :

Whether they named themselves before or after those to whom they spoke or wrote.

The men and women bathed together.

*Inguina succinctus nigra tibi servus alluta  
Stat, quoties calidis nuda feveris aquis.†*

They all powdered themselves with a certain powder, to moderate their sweats. The ancient Gauls, says Sidonius Apollinaris, wore their hair long before, and the hinder part of the head shaved short, a fashion that begins to be revived in this vicious and effeminate age.

The Romans used to pay the watermen their fare at their first stepping into the boat, which we never do till after landing:‡

The Romans paid their watermen at embarking.

*Dum as exigitur, dum mula ligatur,  
Tota abit hora:§*

\* Whilst the fare's paying and the mule is bound,  
‡ Full sixty minutes run their circle round.

The women used to lie on that side the bed next the wall: and for that reason, they called Cæsar, Spondam Regis Nicomedis,|| one of the greatest

\* Chap. 5 of Amyot's translation.

† Mart. lib. vii. epig. 34, ver. 1, 2.

‡ In Holland they pay the watermen their fare in about half way of their voyage.

§ Hor. lib. i. sat. 6, ver. 13, 14.

|| Suet. in Vita Cæsar. sect. 49.

blemishes in his life, and that gave occasion to his soldiers to sing to his face :

*Gallias Cæsar subegit, Nicomedes Cæsarem.*

Cæsar the Gauls subdu'd 'tis true,  
But Nicomedes Cæsar did subdue.

*Ecce Cæsar nunc triumphat, qui subegit Gallias,  
Nicomedes non triumphat, qui subegit Cæsarem.\**

See Cæsar triumphs now for conqu'ring Gaul,  
For conqu'ring him, king Nicomede at all  
No triumph has.

They took breath in their drinking, and dashed their wine :

————— *Quis puer ocus  
Restinguet ardentis Falerni  
Pocula prætersunte lymphe ††*

To cool the tepid wine, what boy is nigh,  
With water which the living founts supply ?

And their lackeys had the same knavish looks as ours :

*O Jane, à terga quem nulla ciconia pinsit,  
Nec manus auriculas imitata est mobilis, albas,  
Nec linguæ quantum sitiet canis Appula tantum.‡*

O Janus, who both ways a spy does wear,  
So that no scoffer, though behind thee, dare  
Make a stork's-bill, ass ears, or, far more long  
Than thirsty panting curs, loll out his tongue.

The ladies of Argos and Rome always mourned in white, as ours did formerly here, and should do still, were I to have my will. But there are whole books written upon this argument.

\* Suet. in Vita Cæsar. sect. 49, not quoted by Montaigne.

† Hor. lib. ii. ode 11, ver. 18.

‡ Persius, sat. 1, ver. 58, &c.

## CHAPTER L.

*Of Democritus and Heraclitus.*

THE judgment is a tool or rather a touch-stone to try all subjects by, and will have an oar in every boat: which is the reason that, in these essays, I take hold of all occasions to exercise it. If it happen to be a subject I do not understand, I try, however, sounding at a distance, and finding it too deep for my stature, I keep on the shore: and this knowledge, that a man can proceed no farther, is one effect of its operation, even in those who are the most conceited. One while in an idle and frivolous subject, I try if it will find out matter whereof to compose a body, and then to prop and support it. Another while I employ it in a noble but knotty subject, wherein the judgment has nothing to introduce of its own, the way being so trodden, that it must of necessity walk in the steps of another. In such a case, the judgment is to direct the way, and of a thousand paths to determine which was the best chosen. I take that argument which fortune first presents me; they are all alike to me, I never design to go through any of them; for I never see the whole of any thing; neither do they who promise to let us see it. Of a hundred members and faces that every thing has, I take one sometimes to look it over only, another while to ripple up the skin, and sometimes to pinch it to the bones; I give a stab, not so wide, but as deep as I can; and am, for the most part, tempted to take it in hand by some absolute gracefulness I discover in it. Did I know myself less, and was I mistaken in my inability, I might, perhaps, venture to handle something or other to the bottom; but sprinkling here one word, and there another, patterning from several pieces, and scattered without design,

The judgment active in every thing.



and without a promise, I am not responsible for them, or obliged to keep close to them, without deviating at my own liberty and pleasure, and giving up myself to doubt and uncertainty, and to my own predominant ignorance.

The mind  
is discover-  
ed in all  
its motions.

Every motion lays us open. The very same soul of Cæsar, that discovered itself so plainly in marshalling the battle of Pharsalia, was as conspicuous in indolent and amorous affairs. We judge of a horse, not only by his gallop, by his very walk, nay, and by seeing him stand in the stable. Amongst the functions of the soul, there are some of a low form. He who does not see her in those inferior offices also, does not fully discover her; and, perhaps, she is best known, when she moves her own natural pace. The wind of the passions takes most hold of her in her high flights; and, moreover, she wholly applies herself to, and exercises herself entirely upon, every subject, and never handles more than one thing at a time, and that not according to it, but according to herself.

It gives  
things  
what shape  
and colour  
it pleases.

Things taken apart have, perhaps, their weights, measures, and conditions; the soul forms them as she conceives of them. Death is terrible to Cicero, desirable to Cato, and indifferent to Socrates. Health, conscience, authority, knowledge, riches, beauty, and their contraries, all strip themselves at becoming the objects of our consideration, and receive a new robe, and of another fashion, from every distinct soul, and of what colour, as brown, bright, green, dark; and of what quality, as sharp, sweet, deep, or superficial, best pleases them; for they are not yet agreed upon any common standard of forms, rules, or proceedings; every one is a queen in her own dominions. Let us, therefore, no more excuse ourselves upon the external qualities of things, it belongs to us to give ourselves an account of them. Our good or ill has no other dependance but on ourselves. It is there that our offerings and our vows

are due, and not to fortune, which has no power over our manners; on the contrary, they draw her in their train, and cast her in their own mould.

Why shall not I judge of Alexander, ranting and drinking, as he sometimes did, at table? or if he played at chess, what string of his soul was not touched and employed by this idle childish game? I hate and avoid it, because it is not merry enough, but too serious a diversion, and I am ashamed to spend as much thought upon that, as would serve to much better uses. He did not more pump his brains to form his glorious expedition to the Indies; and another took not more pains to clear a passage, upon which depends the safety of all mankind. Do but see how we confound this silly diversion, if the soul be not all attention to it, and what a field is hereby opened for every one to know, and to make a right judgment of, himself? I do not more thoroughly sift myself in any other posture.

Montaigne's opinion of the game at chess,

What passion are we exempted from in this game? Anger, spite, malice, impatience, and a vehement desire of getting the better in a concern wherein it were more excusable to be ambitious of being overcome; for to be eminent, and to excel above the common rate in frivolous things, is not graceful in a man of honour.

The game may help us to know ourselves.

What I say in this example, may be said in all others. Every particle, every employment of man, exalts or accuses him, equally with any other. Democritus and Heraclitus were two philosophers, of which the first, finding man's state ridiculous and vain, never appeared abroad but with a jeering and laughing countenance; whereas Heraclitus, commiserating this condition of ours, appeared always with a sorrowful look, and tears in his eyes:

Democritus and Heraclitus, their different humours.

Alter

*Ridebat quoties à limine moverat unum*

*Protuleratque pedem, flebat contrarius alter.\**

\* Juv. sat. x. ver. 28, &c.

One always, when he o'er the threshold stepp'd,  
Laugh'd at the world, the other always wept.

I am clearly for the first humour; not because it is more pleasant to laugh than to weep, but because it is more scornful, and condemns us more than the other; I think we can never be sufficiently despised to our desert. Compassion and bewailing seem to imply some esteem for the thing bemoaned: whereas the things we laugh at we judge of no value. I do not think that we are so unhappy as we are vain, or so malicious as silly, so mischievous as trifling, nor so miserable as we are vile.

Diogenes a  
more cruel  
judge than  
Timon.

Therefore Diogenes, who passed away his time in rolling himself in his tub, and snuffed up his nose at the great Alexander, esteeming us as flies, or bladders puffed up with wind, was a sharper and more penetrating judge, and consequently more to my taste than Timon, surnamed the Man-hater; for what a man hates he lays to heart: this last was an enemy to all mankind; he passionately wished our ruin, and avoided our conversation as dangerous, wicked, and proceeding from depraved nature: the other valued us so little, that we could neither trouble nor infect him by our contagion; and left us to herd with one another, not out of fear, but contempt, of our society; concluding us as incapable of doing good as ill.

Why Statilius refused to enter into the conspiracy against Cæsar.

Of the same strain was Statilius's answer,\* when Brutus courted him into the conspiracy against Cæsar: "He thought the enterprise was just; but he did not think mankind so considerable as to deserve a wise man's concern." According to the doctrine of Hegesias,† who said, "That a wise man ought to do nothing but for himself, forasmuch as he only was worthy of it;" and to the saying of Theodorus, "That it was not reasonable

\* Plutarch, in the Life of Marcus Brutus, ch. 3.

† Diogenes Laertius in the Life of Aristippus, lib. ii. sect. 25, and sect. 28.

“ a wise man should hazard himself for the good of  
 “ his country, and endanger his wisdom for the sake  
 “ of fools.” Our condition is as ridiculous as risible,

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## CHAPTER LI.

### *Of the Vanity of Words.*

**A**RHETORICIAN of time past,\* said, that to make little things appear great, was his profession. The art of rhetoric deceitful, This is a shoe-maker, who can make a great shoe for a little foot. They would have whipped such a fellow in Sparta, for making profession of a lying and deceitful art: and I fancy that Archidamus, who was king of that country, was a little surprised at the answer of Thucydides, when inquiring of him, which was the better wrestler, Pericles† or he; he replied, “ That it was hard to prove; for when I “ have thrown him,” said he, “ he persuades the “ spectators that he had no fall, and carries away “ the prize.”

They who disguise and paint women to give them false beauty, do less hurt; because it is no great loss, whether we see them in their natural complexions, or no; whereas the rhetoricians make it their business to deceive, not our sight, but our judgment, and to adulterate and corrupt the very essence of things. The republics that have maintained themselves in a regular and well-modelled government, such as those of Lacedæmon and Crete,‡ held orators in no very great esteem. Aristotle wisely defined rhetoric to be a science to persuade the people;

\* Plutarch, in the Notable Sayings of the Lacedæmonians, in the article *Agésilas*.

† Plutarch, in the Life of Pericles, chap. 5.

‡ Sextus Empiricus *advers. Mathem. lib. ii. p. 68*, printed at Geneva, 1621.

Socrates and Plato,\* called it an art to flatter and deceive: and those who deny it in the general description, verify it throughout in their precepts.† The Mahometans will not suffer their children to be instructed in it, as being useless; and the Athenians, perceiving of how pernicious consequence the practice of it was, it being in their city of universal esteem, ordered the principal part, which is to move the affections, together with their exordiums and perorations, to be taken away. It is an engine invented to manage and work upon a disorderly rabble, and that never is made use of but as physic for sickly states; in those, where the vulgar, or the ignorant, or both together, have had all the power, as in the cities of Athens, Rhodes, and Rome, and where the public affairs have been in a continual tempest, to such places have the orators always repaired. And, in truth, we shall find few persons in those republics, who pushed themselves into credit without the assistance of eloquence. This was the main spring by which Pompey, Cæsar, Crassus, Lucullus, Lentulus, and Metellus, mounted to that high degree of authority to which they at last arrived, making it of greater use to them than arms, contrary to the opinion of better times. For L. Volumnius speaking in public, in favour of Q. Fabius and Pub. Decius, elected to the consular dignity: “These are men,” said he, “born for war, great in execution, and though no orators, are spirits truly consular.‡” “The subtle, eloquent, and learned, are only good for the city, to make prætors of, to administer justice.”

When eloquence was most flourishing at Rome.

Eloquence flourished most at Rome when affairs were in the worst condition; during the storm of a civil war, intestine commotions, as a rank but un-

\* In Plato's dialogue entitled *Georgias*, p. 287.

† Nothing is more true, of which whoever reads but Quintilian, may be convinced, and he that desires direct and circumstantial proofs of it, need only consult Sextus Empiricus, as above.

‡ Tit. Liv. lib. x. cap. 22.

tilled soil bears the gayest weeds. By which it should seem, that a monarchical government has less need of it than any other: for the stupidity and facility, natural to the common people, and which render them subject to be managed, and led by the ears, at the sweet sound of this harmony, without weighing and considering the reality of things by force of reason; this facility, I say, is not so easily found in a single person, and it is also more easy, by good education and advice, to secure him from the impression of this poison. There never was any famous orator known to come out of Persia or Macedon.

I have said thus much on account of an Italian I have lately received into my service, who was steward or clerk of the kitchen to the late cardinal Caraffa till his death. I made this fellow give me the history of his office; he fell to discourse of this palate science, with such a grave and magisterial countenance, as if he had been handling a profound point of divinity. He explained to me the difference of appetites; that which a man has before he begins to eat, and those after the second and third service; how merely to gratify it, and how to satisfy the first, and then to raise and sharpen it: the management of the sauces, first in general, and then specifying the qualities of the ingredients, and their effects: the differences of sallads, according to their seasons; which ought to be served up hot, and which cold; the manner of their garnishment and decoration, to render them also pleasing to the eye; after this he entered upon the order of the whole service, full of curious and important considerations:

*Nec minimo sanè discrimine refert  
Quo gestu lepores, et quo gallina secetur.\**

Nor with less criticism does observe  
How we a hare, and how a hen, should carve.

And all this puffed out in a pompous magnificent style; the same that is used in discoursing of the

\* Juv. sat. iv. ver. 123.

government of an empire. Which learned lecture of my man, brought this of Terence into my memory :

*Hoc salsum est, hoc adustum est, hoc lautum est parum,  
Illud rectè, iterùm sic memento, sedulo  
Moneo quæ possum pro meâ sapentiâ.  
Postremò tanquam in speculum, in patinas, Demea,  
Inspicere jubeo, et moneo quid facto usus sit.\**

This is too salt, this burnt, this is too plain ;  
That's well, remember to do so again,  
Thus do I still advise to have things fit,  
According to the talent of my wit.  
And then, my Demea, I command my cook,  
That into ev'ry dish he pry and look,  
As if it were a mirror, and go on  
To order all things, as they should be done.

Yet the Greeks themselves highly applauded the order and disposition that Paulus Æmilius observed in the feast he made for them, at his return from Macedon ; but I am not here treating of facts, but of words.

The language of architects.

I do not know whether it may have the same operation upon other men that it has upon me ; but when I hear our architects thunder out their bombast words of pilasters, architraves, and cornices, of the Corinthian and Doric orders, and such like stuff, my imagination is presently possessed with the palace of Appollidonius in Amadis de Gaul ; when, after all, I find them but the paltry pieces of my own kitchen-door.

Of grammarians.

Too-glorious titles given to offices, and illustrious surnames misapplied to persons of mean talents.

To hear men talk in metonymies, metaphors, allegories, and such other terms of grammar, would not one think it some rare and finical form of speaking ? Another imposition akin to this, is to call the officers of our state by the lofty titles of the Romans, though they have no similitude of function, and even less authority and power. And this also is as bad, which I doubt will one day turn to the reproach of this age of ours, viz. unworthily to confer upon any we think fit, the most glorious surnames with which antiquity

\* Ter. Adelph. act. iii. sc. 4, ver. 62, &c.

honoured but one or two personages, in several ages. Plato carried away the surname of Divine; by so universal a consent that never any one repined at it. The Italians, who pretend, and with good reason, to be more sprightly and sensible than other nations; have lately honoured Aretine with the same title; in whose writings, save a tumid phrase, set out with smart turns, ingenious indeed, but far fetched and fantastic; and, besides the eloquence (be it what it will), I see nothing in him above the common writers of his time, so far is he from resembling this ancient divinity. We also give the surname of Great, to princes that have no greatness in them more than common.

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## CHAPTER LII.

### *Of the Parsimony of the Ancients.*

**A**TILIUS Regulus, general of the Roman army in Africa, in the height of all his glory and victories over the Carthaginians, wrote word to the republic,\* that a certain hind he had left in trust with his whole estate, which was in all but seven acres of land, was run away with all his instruments of husbandry, entreating, therefore, that they would let him come home, that he might take care of his own affairs, lest his wife and children should be the sufferers: whereupon the senate appointed another to manage his estate, caused his losses to be made good, and ordered his family to be maintained at the public expense. Parsimony of Regulus.

The elder Cato, returning consul from Spain, sold his field horse,† to save the money it would have cost in bringing him back by sea into Italy; and being And of Cato.

\* Valer. Maxim. lib. iv. cap. 4, sect. 5.

† Plutarch, in the Life of Cato the Censor, chap. 9.



governor of Sardinia, made all his visits on foot, without other train than one officer of the republic, who carried his robe, and a censor for sacrifices; and, for the most part, he carried his mail himself. He bragged that he had never worn a gown that cost above ten crowns, nor had sent above ten pence to the market for one day's provision; and that, as to his country-houses, he had not one that was rough cast on the outside.

Scipio Æmilianus,\* after two triumphs and two consulships, went on an embassy with no more than seven servants in his train. It is said, that Homer had never more than one, Plato but three, and Zeno, founder of the sect of Stoics, none at all.† Tiberius Gracchus was allowed but five-pence half-penny a day, when employed as a commissioner for the public affairs, though he was, at that time, the first man in Rome.‡

## CHAPTER LIII.

### *Of the Saying of Cæsar.*

Man's im-  
perfection  
demon-  
strated by  
the incon-  
stancy of  
his desires.

IF we would sometimes bestow a little consideration upon ourselves, and employ the time we spend in canvassing other men's actions, and prying into things that are foreign to us, in examining our own hearts, we would soon perceive of what weak and defective materials this fabric of ours is composed. Is it not a singular testimony of imperfection, that we cannot establish our satisfaction in any one thing,

\* Valer. Maxim. lib. iv. cap. 3, sect. 13.

† Seneca, in Consolat. ad Helvium, cap. 12.

‡ Plutarch, in the Life of Tiberius Gracchus, cap. 4. But here Montaigne misemploys this passage, which makes nothing for his purpose; for Plutarch there says expressly, that this little sum was allowed to Tiberius Gracchus, purely to vex and mortify him. See Amyot's translation.

and that even our own fancy and desire should deprive us of the power to choose what is most necessary for us? A very good proof of this, is the great dispute that has ever been amongst the philosophers, of finding out man's sovereign good; a dispute which continues yet, and will eternally continue, without being decided or determined:

— *Dum abest quod avemus, id exuperare videtur,  
Cætera, post aliud cum contigit illud, avemus,  
Et sitis æqua tenet.\**

Still with desire through fancy's regions toss'd,  
We seek new joys, and prize the absent most.

Whatever it is that falls into our knowledge and possession, we find that it satisfies not, and still pant after things to come, and unknown, because the present do not satiate us; not that, in my judgment, they have not in them wherewith to glut us, but because we seize them with an unruly and immoderate gripe:

*Nam cum vidit hic ad victum quæ flagitat usus,  
Et per quæ possent vitam consistere tutam,  
Omnia jam firmè mortalibus esse parata,  
Divitiis homines, et honore et laude potentes  
Affluere, atque bonâ natorum excellere jamâ,  
Nec minùs esse domi cuiquam tamen anxia corda,  
Atque animum infestis cogi servire querelis:  
Intellexit ibi vitium vas facere ipsum,  
Omniaque illius vitia corrupit intus  
Que collata foris, et commoda quæque venirent.†*

For when he saw all things that had regard  
To life's subsistence, for mankind prepar'd,  
That men in wealth and honours did abound,  
That with a noble race their joys were crown'd;  
That yet they groan'd, with cares and fears oppress'd,  
Each finding a disturber in his breast;  
He then perceiv'd the fault lay hid in man,  
In whom the bane of his own bliss began.

Our appetite is irresolute and fickle, it can neither keep nor enjoy any thing with a good grace; and

\* Lucret. lib. iii. ver. 1095.

† Ibid. lib. vi. ver. 9, &c.

man, concluding it to be the fault of the things he is possessed of, fills himself with, and feeds himself upon, the idea of things he neither knows nor understands, to which he devotes his hopes and his desires, and pays them reverence and honour, according to the saying of Cæsar, *Communī fit vitio naturæ, ut invisīs latitantibus atque incognitis rebus magis confidamus, vehementiusque exterreāmur.*\* “It is the common vice of nature, that we have most confidence in, and the greatest fear of, things unseen, concealed, and unknown.”

## CHAPTER LIV.

### *Of Vain Subtleties.*

Poetry of  
an odd  
fancy.

THERE are a sort of vain and frivolous subtleties, from which men sometimes expect to derive applause; as the poets who compose whole poems, with every line beginning with the same letter: we see the shapes of eggs, globes, wings, and hatchets, cut out by the ancient Greeks, by the measure of their verses, making them longer or shorter, to represent such or such a figure. Of this nature was his employment, who made it his business to compute into how many several orders the letters of the alphabet might be transposed, and found out that incredible number mentioned in Plutarch.†

\* De Bello Civili, lib. ii.

† This was Alexander, as may be seen in Quintil. Institut. Orat. lib. ii. cap. 20, where he defines *Μακρολογία*, “to be a certain unnecessary imitation of art, which really does neither good nor harm, but is as unprofitable and ridiculous, as was the labour of that man, who had so perfectly learned to cast small peas through the eye of a needle, at a good distance, that he never missed one, and was justly rewarded for it, as it is said, by Alexander, who saw the performance, with a bushel of peas.” M. Barbeyrac, to whom I am obliged for this passage, observes, that Montaigne has

I am mightily pleased with the humour of the gentleman, who, having a man brought before him, that had learned to throw a grain of millet, with such dexterity, as never to miss the eye of a needle; and being afterwards entreated to give something for the reward of so rare a performance, he pleasantly, and, in my opinion, very justly, ordered two or three bushels of the same grain to be delivered to him, that he might not want wherewith to exercise so famous an art. It is a strong evidence of a weak judgment, for men to approve of things for their being rare and new, or even for being difficult, when, at the same time, they are good for nothing at all.

I come just now from playing with my own family, at who could find out the most things that are held by their two extremities; as, Sire, which is a title given to the greatest person in the nation, viz. the king, and also to the vulgar, as tradesmen; but never to men of the intermediate ranks. The women of great quality are called Madames; gentlewomen of the middle rank, Mademoiselles; and the meanest sort of women, Madames, as the first. The canopies of state over tables are not permitted, but in the palaces of princes, and taverns.\* Democritus said, that the gods and the beasts were quicker of apprehension than men, who are in the middle story. The Romans wore the same habit at funerals and feasts.

It is most certain, that extreme fear, and extreme ardour of courage, equally bind and relax the belly. The nickname of Trembling, with which they sur-named Sancho, the XIIth king of Navarre, sufficiently informeth, that valour will cause a trembling in the limbs, as well as fear. The friends of that king, or some other person, who, upon the like oc-

Frivolous  
industry  
rewarded  
as it de-  
served.

Instances  
of things  
that are  
kept up by  
the two ex-  
tremities.

The very  
same effect  
produced  
by fear and  
by extraor-  
dinary cou-  
rage.

not told this story very exactly, either because his memory failed him, or because, perhaps, he took it from some other historian, though Quintilian seems to be the only original author of it.

\* Plutarch, De Placitis Philosophorum, lib. iv. ch. 10.

casation, was wont to be in the same disorder, tried to compose him, by representing the danger he was going to run, less than it was: "You do not know me," said he, "for could my flesh know the danger my courage will presently carry it into, it would actually creep upon my bones."

The faintness that surprises us from frigidity, or disgusts in the exercises of Venus, is also occasioned by a too violent desire, and an immoderate heat.

Extreme coldness and extreme heat, boil and roast. Aristotle says, that sows of lead will melt and run with cold, and in the extremity of winter, as well as with a vehement heat.

Desire and satiety fill all the gradations, above and below pleasure, with grief.

Wisdom  
and igno-  
rance at-  
tain to the  
same ends.

Ignorance and wisdom meet in the same centre of sentiment and resolution, as to the suffering of human accidents; the wise control and triumph over ill, the others know it not: these last are, as a man may say, on this side of accidents, the other are beyond them; who after having well weighed and considered their qualities, and measured and judged them as they are, by virtue of a vigorous soul they mount above their reach. They disdain and trample them under foot, having a firm and well fortified soul, against which the darts of fortune coming to strike, they must of necessity rebound, and be blunted. The ordinary and middle condition of men, lies between these two extremities, consisting of such as perceive evils, feel them, and are not able to support them.

Infancy and extreme old age, meet in the weakness of the brain; avarice and profusion centre in the like desire of gain.

Two kinds  
of igno-  
rance.

A man may say, with some colour of truth, that there is an abecedarian ignorance that precedes knowledge, and a doctoral ignorance that comes after it; an ignorance that knowledge creates and begets, just as it dispatches and destroys the former.

Persons of mean understandings, not so inquisitive, nor so well instructed, are made good Christians; and, by reverence and obedience, implicitly believe, and abide by their belief.

The fitness of plain understandings to Christianity.

In moderate understandings, and the middle sort of capacities, the error of opinions is begotten, and there is some colour of reason for imputing our walking on in the old beaten path, to simplicity and stupidity, meaning us who have not informed ourselves by study.

Mean understandings liable to err.

The nobler souls, more settled and clear-sighted, make up another sort of true believers; who, by a long and religious investigation of truth, penetrate into the deeper and more abstruse parts of the scriptures, and discover the mysterious and divine secret of our ecclesiastical polity. And yet we see some, who, by this middle step, are arrived to that supreme degree, with marvellous fruit and confirmation, as to the utmost limit of Christian intelligence, and enjoying their victory with consolation, thanksgiving, reformation of manners, and great modesty. I do not intend with these to rank some others, who, to clear themselves from all suspicion of their former errors, and to satisfy us that they are true converts, render themselves extremely indiscreet and unjust in the carrying on our cause, and, by that means, blemish it with the imputation of violence.

Men of the greatest understanding the completest Christians.

The simple peasants are a good people, and so are the philosophers: men of strong and clear natural parts, enriched with ample instruction in the useful sciences. The mongrels, who have disdained the first form of the ignorance of letters, and have not been able to attain to the other (sitting between two stools, as I and many more do), are dangerous, foolish, and impertinent; these are they that trouble the world. And, therefore, it is that I, for my own part, retreat as much as I can towards my first and natural station, from whence I so vainly attempted to advance.

The mere peasant and the philosopher good men.

Popular  
poetry com-  
parable to  
the most  
perfect.

The vulgar and purely natural poetry, has certain proprieties and graces, by which it may compare with the most beautiful poetry perfected by art ; as is evident in our Gascon ballads, and in the songs that are brought us from nations which know no science, nor so much as writing.

Middling  
poetry in-  
tolerable.

The middle sort of poetry, between these two, is despised, and of no value nor honour. But forasmuch as after a path is laid open to the fancy, I have found, as it commonly falls out, that what we took for a rare and difficult subject and exercise, is not so ; and that, after the invention is once warm, it finds out an infinite number of parallel examples, I shall only add this one : that were these Essays of mine worthy of criticism, it might, I think, fall out, that they would not much take with common and vulgar capacities, nor be very acceptable to those that are singular and excellent ; for those that are the first would not understand them enough, and the last too much, and so they might hover in the middle region.

Mon-  
taigne's  
opinion of  
his Essays.

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## CHAPTER LV.

### *Of Smells.*

Alexan-  
der's sweat  
had an  
agreeable  
smell.

IT has been reported of some, particularly of Alexander the Great,\* that their sweat diffused an odoriferous smell, occasioned by some rare and extraordinary constitution, of which Plutarch, and others, have been inquisitive into the cause. But the ordinary constitution of human bodies is quite otherwise, and their best qualities is to be exempt from smells : nay, that is the sweetest of all breaths

\* Plutarch, in the Life of Alexander, chap. 1.

which yields no offensive smell, like the breaths of healthful children : which made Plautus say,

*Mulier tùm benè olet, ubi nihil olet.\**

That woman we a sweet one call,  
Whose body yields no scent at all.

And as for those who use exotic perfumes, there is good reason to suspect they endeavour thereby to conceal some disagreeable effluvia from themselves; according to that of Mr. Jonson, which, without offence to Monsieur de Montaigne, I will here presume to insert, it being at least as well said, as any of those he quotes out of the ancient poets:

Still to be neat, still to be drest,  
As you were going to a feast,  
Still to be powder'd, still perfum'd :  
Lady, it is to be presum'd,  
Though art's hid causes are not found,  
All is not sweet, all is not sound.†

Some of the ancient poets have even asserted that to smell sweet, is to stink : as may be judged by these following :

*Rides nos, Coracine, nil olentes :  
Malo quam bene olere, nil olere.‡*

Because thou, Coracine, still dost go  
With musk and ambergrease perfum'd so,  
We under thy contempt, forsooth, must fall ;  
I'd rather than smell sweet, not smell at all.

And elsewhere :

*Posthume, non benè olet, qui benè semper olet.§*

He does not naturally smell well,  
Who always of perfumes does smell.

I am nevertheless a strange lover of good smells, and as much abominate the ill ones, which I reach at a greater distance, I think, than other men :

\* Plaut. Mostebl. act. i. sc. 3, ver. 117.

† Ben Jonson.

‡ Mart. lib. vi. epig. 55, ver. 4, 5.

§ Id. lib. ii. epig. 12, ver. 4.



*Namque sagaciùs unus odoror,  
Polypus, an gravis hirsutis cubit hircus in alia,  
Quam canis acer ubi lateat sus.\**

For I can smell a putrid polypus,  
Or the rank arm-pits of a red-hair'd fuss,  
As soon as best nos'd hound the stinking stie,  
Where the wild boars in beechen forest lie.

Of smells, the most simple and natural seem to be most pleasing. This is what the ladies ought chiefly to regard. In the wildest parts of Barbary, the Scythian women, after bathing, were wont to besmear their faces, and whole bodies, with a certain odoriferous drug, growing in their own territories; which being cleansed off, when they came near the men, they were found perfumed and sleek: it is not to be believed, how strangely all sorts of odours cleave to me, and how apt my skin is to imbibe them. He that complains of nature, that she has not furnished mankind with a vehicle to convey smells to the nose, were to blame; for they will carry themselves; especially to me; my very mustachios, which are full grown, perform that office; for if I stroke them but with my gloves, or handkerchief, the scent will remain in them a whole day: they used to discover formerly where I had been; the close, luscious, eager, and melting kisses of youth, then left a sweetness upon my lips, for several hours after. And yet I have found myself very little subject to epidemic diseases, that are caught, either by conversing with the diseased, or bred by the contagion of the air; I have very well escaped from those of my time, of which there have been several sorts in our cities and armies. We read of Socrates, that though he never quitted Athens, during the frequent returns of the plague to that city, he only was never infected.

The origin  
of the use  
of incense  
in churches.

Physicians might (I believe) extract greater utility from odours, than they do; for I have often ob-

\* Hor. Ep. lib. vi. ode 12, ver. 4.

served they cause an alteration in me, and work upon my spirits according to their several virtues ; which makes me approve of what is said, namely, that the use of incense and perfumes in churches, so ancient, and so universally received in all nations, and religions, was intended to cheer us, and to rouse and purify the senses, the better to fit us for contemplation.

I could have been glad, the better to judge of it, to have tasted the culinary compounds of those cooks who had the knack of perfuming their provisions, as was particularly observed at the table of the king of Tunis, who in our days landed at Naples, to have an interview with Charles, the emperor. His dishes were stuffed with odoriferous drugs, to such an expense, that the cookery of one peacock and two pheasants, amounted to a hundred ducats, dressed after their fashion. And when they were carved, not only the dining-room, but all the apartments of his palace, and the adjoining streets were filled with an aromatic vapour, which did not presently vanish. My chief care in choosing my lodging, is always to avoid a thick and stinking air ; and those beautiful cities of Venice and Paris, have very much lessened the fondness I had for them, the one by the stench of her marshes, and the other of her mud.

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## CHAPTER LVI.

### *Of Prayers.*

I PROPOSE formless and undetermined fancies, like those who publish subtle questions, to be disputed upon in the schools, not to establish truth, but to seek it : and I submit them to the better judgment of those, whose office it is to regulate, not my writings and actions only, but my opinions. Let what I here set down meet with correction or applause, it will be

alike welcome and useful to me, who condemn it for absurd and impious, if any thing should be found, through ignorance or inadvertency, couched in this rhapsody, contrary to the sacred resolutions and prescriptions of the Roman Catholic church, in which I was born, and in which I will die. And yet, always submitting to the authority of their censure, who have an absolute power over me, I thus venture, at random, to treat of every thing, as I do the present subject.

**Pater-noster, a prayer which Christians ought constantly to use.**

I know not if I am deceived ; but since, by a special favour of the divine goodness, a certain form of prayer has been prescribed and dictated to us, word by word, from the mouth of God himself, I have ever been of opinion, that we ought to have it in more frequent use than we yet have ; and, if I were worthy to advise, at the sitting down to and rising from our tables, at our rising from and going to bed, and in every particular action, wherein it is a custom to pray, I would that Christians should make use of the Lord's prayer, if not alone, yet at least always. The church may lengthen and diversify prayers, according to the necessity of our instruction ; for I know very well, that it is always the same in substance, and the same thing : but yet such a preference ought to be given to that prayer, that the people should have it continually in their mouths ; for it is most certain, that all necessary petitions are comprehended in it, and that it is infinitely proper for all occasions. It is the only prayer I use in all places, and what I repeat instead of changing ; whence it also happens, that I have no other by heart so much as that.

**Men ought not to call upon God indifferently upon all occasions.**

It just now comes into my mind, from whence we should derive the error of having recourse to God in all our designs and enterprises, of applying to him in all our wants, and in all places where our weakness stands in need of support, without considering whether the occasion be just or otherwise, and of invoking his name and power, in what estate soever

we are, or what action we are engaged in, how vicious soever: he is, indeed, our sole protector, and can do all things for us: but though he is pleased to honour us with his paternal care, he is, notwithstanding, as just as he is good and mighty; for he oftner exercises his justice than his power, and favours us according to that, and not according to our petitions.

Plato, in his laws, makes three credenda injurious to the gods. 1. That there is none. 2. That they concern not themselves about our affairs. And, 3. That they never deny any thing to our vows, offerings, and sacrifices.\* The first of these errors (according to his opinion) never continued invincible in any man, from his infancy to his old age; the other two, he confesses, men might be obstinate in.

God's justice, and his power, are inseparable; and therefore in vain we invoke his power in an unjust cause: we are to have our souls pure, at that moment at least, wherein we pray to him, and free from all vicious passions, otherwise we ourselves present him the rods wherewith to chastise us. Instead of repairing any thing we have done amiss, we double the wickedness and the offence, whilst we offer to him, to whom we are to sue for pardon, an address full of irreverence and hatred. Which makes me not very apt to applaud those whom I observe to be so frequent on their knees, if the actions before and after the prayer, do not give me some evidence of reformation and amendment:

The soul  
must be  
quite pure  
when it  
prays to  
God.

————— *Si nocturnus adulter*  
*Tempora sanctonico velas adoperta cucullo.†*  
With night adulteries, if, being foul,  
Thou veil'st thy guilty forehead with a cowl.

The state of a man, that mixes devotion with an execrable life, seems, in some sort, more to be condemned, than that of a man who is all of a piece,

\* Plato de Legibus, lib. x. p. 664.

† Juv. sat. viii. ver. 144.

and dissolute throughout ; yet our church denies admittance to and communion with men who are obstinate and incorrigible in any notorious impiety.

Praying to  
God, only  
for fashion's  
sake, wherein  
blamable.

We pray by custom, and for fashion's sake ; or rather we read, or pronounce our prayers aloud, which is no better than a show of devotion : and I am scandalised to see a man cross himself thrice at the Benedicite, and as often at saying grace (and the more, because it is a sign which I have in great veneration, and constant use, even when I yawn and stretch), and yet employ the rest of the day in malice, avarice, and injustice ; devoting one hour to God, the rest to the Devil, as if by commutation and composition. It is a wonder to see actions, so various in themselves, linked in such a chain as not to suffer any alteration, even upon the very confines and passes from one to the other. What a prodigious conscience must that be, that can be at quiet within itself, whilst it harbours in the same breast both the crime and the judge, without their jarring ? A man whose brain is continually working upon whoredom, which he knows to be odious in the sight of God, what does he say when he addresses him ? He draws back, but suddenly relapses. If the awe of the divine justice, and the presence of his Maker, did, as he pretends, strike and chastise his soul, how short soever the repentance might be, the very fear of offending him, would so often present itself to his imagination, that he would instantly subdue those vices which are most natural and habitual to him.

What we  
must think  
of the  
prayers of  
those who  
obstinately  
persist in  
vicious  
habits.

But what shall we say of those, who settle their whole course of life, upon the profit and emolument of a sin which they know to be mortal ? How many trades and vocations have we admitted and countenanced amongst us, whose very essence is vicious ? And he that confessed to me, that he had all his lifetime professed and practised a religion, in his opinion damnable, and contrary to his conscience, only to preserve his credit, and the honour of his employ-

ments, how could his courage bear such a conviction? What can men say of the divine justice upon this subject? Their repentance consisting in a visible and sensible reparation, they have no way to prove it both to God and man. Are they so impudent as to sue for remission, without making satisfaction, and without repentance? I look upon these in the same condition with the first; but the obstinacy is not here so easy to be overcome. This contrariety and volubility of opinion, so sudden and violent as they feign it to be, is a kind of miracle to me. They represent to us the state of an intolerable anxiety of mind. It seemed to me a fantastic imagination in those, who, some years past, were wont to reproach every man of shining parts, who made profession of the Roman Catholic religion, that it was but feigned; maintaining, moreover, to do him honour forsooth, that whatever he might pretend to the contrary, he could not but, in his heart, be of their reformed opinion. An untoward disease, that a man should be so rivetted to his own belief, as to fancy that it is impossible to believe otherwise than he does; and yet worse in this, that he should entertain an opinion that any man, so qualified, should prefer any present disparity of fortune, to the promises of eternal life, and the menaces of eternal damnation. They may believe me, could any thing have tempted my youth, the ambition of encountering the danger and difficulties that attended the late commotions, had not been one of the least motives.

It is not without very good reason, in my opinion, that the church interdicts the promiscuous, rash, and indiscreet use of the sacred and divine songs, with which the Holy Ghost inspired king David. We ought not to mix God in our actions, but with the highest reverence and honour. That poesy is too divine to be employed only to exercise the lungs, and to delight our ears. It ought to come from the soul, and not from the tongue. It is not fit that a boy in a shop, amongst his vain and frivolous

How, and  
by whom,  
David's  
psalms  
ought to be  
sung.

thoughts, should be permitted to entertain and divert himself with psalmody. Neither is it right, to see the Holy Bible, containing the sacred mysteries of our belief, rummaged in a hall or a kitchen. They were formerly mysteries, but are now become things of sport and pastime. It is too serious and too venerable a study, to be exercised cursorily and hastily. The reading of the scripture ought to be a temperate and premeditated act, and to which men should always add this devout preface, *Sursum corda*, preparing even the body to so humble and composed a gesture and countenance, as to evidence a particular veneration and attention. Neither is it a book for every one to study, but those only who are devoted to it by the divine call.<sup>2</sup> The wicked and ignorant grow worse and worse by it. It is not a story to tell, but a history to fear, reverence, and adore. Are not they then pleasant men, who think they have rendered this fit for the people's handling, by translating it into the vulgar tongue? does the understanding of all therein contained, only stick at words? I venture to say farther, that by this little approach to it, they are the farther off. Pure ignorance, and implicit faith in another's exposition, were wiser, and more salutiferous, than this vain and verbal knowledge, which has only proved the nurse of temerity and presumption. And I do further believe, that the liberty every one has taken to disperse so sacred and important a writ into so many idioms, carries with it a great deal more of danger than utility. The Jews, Mahometans, and almost all others, have espoused and reverence the language wherein their mysteries were originally conceived, and have, not without colour of reason, forbid the version or alteration of them in any other. Are we sure, that in Biscay, and in Brittany, there are competent judges of this affair, to establish this translation into their own language? The Catholic church has not a more difficult and solemn judgment to make. In preaching and speaking, the interpreta-

tion is vague, free, mutable, and of only a part;\* consequently it is not the same. One of our Greek historians justly blames the age he lived in, for that the secrets of the Christian religion were dispersed through his country, into the hands of the meanest mechanics, to argue upon, and determine, according to his own sense; and that we ought to be much ashamed, we, who by God's grace enjoy the pure mysteries of piety, to suffer them to be prophaned by the mouths of the ignorant vulgar; considering, that the Gentiles expressly forbade Socrates, Plato, and the other sages, to inquire into, or talk of, the things committed to the priests of Delphos. The same historian says, moreover, that the factions of princes, upon theological points, are not armed with zeal, but fury; that zeal partakes of the divine wisdom and justice, and governs itself with regularity and moderation; but degenerates into hatred and envy, and produces tares and nettles, instead of corn and wine, when it is conducted by human passions. It was truly said of another, who, advising the emperor Theodosius, told him, that disputes did not so much rock the schisms of the church asleep, as it roused them, and animated heresies; that therefore all contentions and logical disputations were to be avoided, and men were absolutely to acquiesce in the prescriptions and formulas of faith, established by the ancients. And the emperor Andronicus, finding some great men at high words in his palace with Lapodius, about one of our articles of great importance, gave them a severe check, and threatened to cause them to be thrown into the river, if they did not desist.

\* "That is to say, this, by consequence, is not to compare with a complete translation of the Holy Scriptures, which engages to determine and fix the sense of this whole sacred book." Before I could be satisfied in my own mind, whether this paraphrase expressed Montaigne's meaning, I turned to consult Mr. Cotton's English translation; but I found that this entire sentence from the words "Preaching and speaking" was omitted, which may serve for my excuse, if my paraphrase be not exact.



The very women and children, now-a-days, take upon them to dispute with the oldest and most experienced men about the ecclesiastical laws : whereas, the first of those of Plato\* forbids them to inquire so much as into the civil laws, which were to take place as divine ordinances ; and, allowing the old men to confer amongst themselves,† or with the magistrate, about those things, it adds, provided it be not in the presence of young and profane persons. A bishop has left in writing, that, at the other end of the world, there is an isle, by the ancients called Dioscorides,‡ bearing all sorts of trees and fruits, and in a healthy air ; the inhabitants of which are Christians, having churches and altars that are only adorned with crucifixes, without any other images ; great observers of fasts and feasts ; exact payers of the tithes to the priest ; and so chaste, that none of them are permitted to have to do with more than one woman in his life ; as to the rest, so content are they with their condition, that, though environed with the sea, they know nothing of navigation : and so simple that they understand not one syllable of the religion wherein they are so devout. And, though it is incredible to such as do not know it, the Pagans, who are such zealous idolaters, know nothing more of their gods than their bare names, and their statues. The ancient beginning of Menalippus, a tragedy of Euripides, ran thus :§

O Jupiter, thy name alone,  
Not what thou art, to me is known.

\* De Legibus, lib. i. p. 569.

† In freely censuring whatever they find blame-worthy, because the discovery of what is bad in things, is good ; such knowledge giving an opportunity for their redress, to such as examine what is said, not as a malicious critic, but with a spirit of equity. Plato, De Legib. i. p. 569.

‡ An island of the Red Sea, supposed to be the same with that now called Zocotora. See Bayle's Dictionary, in the article *Dioscorides*.

§ Plutarch's Treatise of Love, ch. 12.

I have known also, in my time, some men's writings found fault with, for being purely human and philosophical, without any mixture of divinity; and yet whoever should, on the contrary, say, that divine doctrine, as queen and regent of the rest, better keeps her state apart; that she ought to be sovereign throughout, not subsidiary and suffragan: and that perhaps grammatical, rhetorical, and logical examples, may elsewhere be more suitably chosen, as also the arguments for the stage and public entertainments, than from so sacred a matter; that divine arguments are considered with greater veneration and attention when by themselves, and in their own proper style, than when mixed with human discourses; that it is a fault much more often observed, that the divines write too humanly, than that the humanists write not theologically enough (philosophy, says St. Chrysostom, has long been banished the holy schools, as an handmaid altogether useless, and thought unworthy to peep, so much as in passing by the door, into the repository of the sacred treasures of celestial doctrines); and that the human way of speaking is of a much lower form, and ought not to be clothed with the dignity, authority, and majesty of divine eloquence; I say, whoever, on the contrary, should object all this, would not be without some reason on his side. Let who will, *verbiſ indisciplinatis*,\* talk of fortune, destiny, accident, good and evil hap, the gods, and other such like phrases, according to his humour; I, for my part, propose fancies merely human, and merely my own, and that simply, and separately considered, as human fancies, not as determined by any decree of heaven, and incapable of doubt or dispute: matters of opinion, not matters of faith; things which I discourse of, according to my own capacity, not what I believe according to God; which also I do after a laical,

\* In vulgar and unhallowed terms. These two Latin words, which I thus translate, are taken from St. Augustine de Civitate Dei, lib. x. cap. 29,

not clerical, and yet always after a very religious manner, as lads propose their exercises not to instruct, but to be instructed. And it were as rational to affirm, that an edict, enjoining all people (perhaps enjoining silence on me too), but such as are public professors of it, to be very reserved in writing of religion, would carry with it some show of utility and justice.

God's name  
ought not  
to be used  
in common  
discourse.

I have been told, that even those who are not of our church, do, nevertheless, amongst themselves, expressly forbid the name of God to be used in common discourse: not so much as by way of interjection, exclamation, affirmation, or comparison; and I think them in the right. Upon what occasion soever we call upon God to accompany and assist us, it ought always to be done with the greatest reverence and devotion.

God ought  
to be sel-  
dom pray-  
ed to, and  
why.

There is, if I mistake not, a passage in Xenophon, where he tells us, that we ought the more seldom to call upon God, because it is hard to compose our souls to such a degree of calmness, penitence, and devotion, as it ought to be in at such time, otherwise our prayers are not only vain and fruitless, but vicious: "Forgive us," we say, "our trespasses, as we forgive them that trespass against us." What do we say by this petition, but that we present him a soul free from all rancour and revenge? And yet we invoke God's assistance in our vices, and invite him in our unjust-designs:

*Quæ nisi seductis nequeas committere divis.\**

And only to the gods apart,  
Whisper the wishes of the heart.†

The covetous man prays for the vain and superfluous preservation of his riches; the ambitious, for victory,

\* Pers. sat. ii. ver. 4.

† Seneca has very solidly censured this extravagance of mankind at the end of epist. 10. "How great is the folly of mankind! they whisper the most execrable prayers to the gods, and if any mortal lend an ear they are silent, for fear men should know what they mutter to the Deity."

and the conduct of his fortune; the thief calls God to his assistance to deliver him from the dangers and difficulties that obstruct his wicked designs; or returns him thanks for the facility he has met with in cutting a traveller's throat. At the door of the house they are going to storm, or break into by force of a petard, they fall to prayers for success, having their intention and hopes full of cruelty, avarice, and luxury:

*Hoc ipsum quo tu Jovis aurem impellere tentas,  
Dic agedum Staiο, proh Jupiter, & bone, clamet,  
Jupiter, at sese non clamet Jupiter ipse ?\**

Well, what you urg'd to Jove before, impart  
To Staius now, e'en Staius' self would start;  
O Jove, O gracious Jove, would he exclaim:  
And must not Jove himself then do the same?

Margaret, queen of Navarre, tells of a young prince (who, though she does not name him, is easily enough, by his great quality, to be known), who going upon an amorous assignation, to lie with an advocate's wife of Paris, his way thither being through a church, he never passed that holy place, going to or returning from this exercise, but he always kneeled down to pray. What it was he implored the divine favour for, while his soul was full of such virtuous mediations, I leave you to judge: this, nevertheless, the queen instances as a testimony of singular devotion. But this is not the only proof that women are not very fit to treat of theological points. True prayer, and a religious reconciling of ourselves to Almighty God, cannot enter into an impure soul, which is at that very instant subject to the dominion of Satan. He, who calls God to his assistance whilst he is in a train of vice, does as if a cut-purse should call a magistrate to help him, or like those who bring in the name of God to the attestation of a lie:

\* Pers. sat. ii. ver. 21,

————— *Tacito mala vota susurro  
Concipimus.\**

In silent thoughts we guilty prayers prefer.

Few men durst publish the secret petitions they make to God :

*Haud cuivis promptum est, murmurque humilesque susurros  
Tollere de templis, et aperto vivere volo.†*

Few from their pious mumblings dare depart,  
And make profession of their inmost heart.

This is the reason why the Pythagoreans would have their prayers always public, to be heard by every one, to the end they might not petition for things indecent or unjust, as he did :

————— *Clare cum dixit, Apollo,  
Labra movet metuens audiri : Pulchra Laverna,  
Da mihi fallere, da justum, sanctumque videri,  
Noctem peccatis, et fraudibus oljice nubem.‡*

Who with loud voice pronounc'd Apollo's name ;  
But when the following prayers he prefer'd  
Scarce moves his lips for fear of being heard :  
" Beauteous Laverno, my petition hear ;  
" Let me with truth and sanctity appear :  
" Oh ! give me to deceive, and, with a veil  
" Of darkness and of night, my crimes conceal !"

The gods severely punished the prayers of Œdipus, in granting them ; he had prayed that his children might, amongst themselves, determine the succession to his throne by arms ; and was so miserable, as to see himself taken at his word. We are not to pray that all things may go as we would have them, but as it shall please the divine wisdom.

Prayer,  
how abused.

We seem, in truth, to make use of our prayers, as of a kind of gibberish, and as those do who employ holy words about sorceries and magical operations : and as if we made account, that the effect of them depended upon the contexture, the sound, and

\* Lucan. lib. v. ver. 104, 105.

† Pers. sat. ii. ver. 6, 7.

‡ Hor. lib. i. ep. 16, ver. 59, &c.

series of words, or upon the composing of the countenance. For having the soul contaminated with concupiscence, not touched with repentance, or comforted by any late reconciliation with Almighty God, we go to present him such words as the memory suggests to the tongue, and hope from thence to obtain the remission of our sins. There is nothing so easy, so mild, and so favourable as the divine law; it calls us to it, guilty and abominable as we are; extends its arms, and receives us into its bosom, as foul and polluted as we at present are, and are like to be for the future. But then, in return, we are to look upon it with a respectful eye, we are to receive this pardon with thanksgiving, and, for that instant at least, wherein we address ourselves to God, to have the soul sorry for its faults, and at variance with those passions, that seduced her to offend him; for neither the gods nor good men (says Plato) will accept the present of a wicked man.

*Immunis aram si tetigit manus,  
Non sumptuosa blandior hostia  
Mollibit aversos penates,  
Farre pio, et saliente micâ,\**

The pious off'ring of a piece of bread,  
If on the altar by a pure hand laid,  
Than costly hecatombs, will better please  
Th' offended gods, and their just wrath appease.

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## CHAPTER LVII.

### *Of Age.*

**I** CANNOT allow of our way of establishing the duration of life. I see that the wise contract it very much, in comparison of the common opinion. What

Age of  
Cato when  
he killed  
himself.

\* Hor. lib. iii. ode 23, ver. 17, &c.

The natural  
course of  
man's life.

(said the younger Cato to those who would stay his hand from killing himself), am I now of an age to be reproached that I go out of the world too soon? \* and yet he was but forty-eight years old. He thought that to be a mature and really an advanced age, considering how few arrive to it: and they who, soothing their thoughts with I know not what course, which they call natural, promise themselves some years beyond it, could they be privileged from the fatal accidents, to which every one is by nature exposed, might have some reason so to do. What an idle conceit is it, to expect to die of a mere decay of strength, attending extreme old age, and to propose to ourselves no shorter lease of life than that, considering it as a kind of death of all others the most rare and uncommon? We call this only a natural death, as if it were contrary to nature, to see a man break his neck with a fall, be drowned in shipwreck at sea, or snatched away with a pleurisy, or the plague; and, as if our ordinary condition of life did not expose us to all these inconveniences. Let us no more flatter ourselves with these fine words; we ought rather, at a venture, to call that natural, which is general, common, and universal.

To die of  
old age, a  
thing sin-  
gular and  
extraordi-  
nary.

To die of old age, is a death rare, extraordinary, and singular, by so much the less natural than the other deaths, and therefore the less to be hoped for. It is indeed the boundary of life, beyond which we are not to pass; it is a lease which nature grants by particular favour, perhaps, to one only, in the space of two or three ages; discharging him from all the traverses and difficulties she had strewed in the mid-way of this long career. And, therefore, my opinion is, that when once forty years old, we should consider our time of life as an age to which very few arrive: for seeing that men do not usually last so long, it is a sign that we are pretty well advanced; and since we have exceeded the bounds, which

\* Plutarch, in the Life of Cato of Utica, cap. 20.

make the common measure of life, we ought not to expect to go much farther. Having escaped so many pits of death, whereinto we have seen so many other men fall, we should acknowledge that so extraordinary a fortune, as that which has hitherto kept us above ground beyond the ordinary term of life, is not likely to continue long.

It is a false notion that our very laws are guilty of, which do not allow that a man is capable of managing his own estate till he be twenty-five years old, whereas he will have much ado to manage his life so long. Augustus\* cut off five years from the ancient Roman standard, and declared, that thirty years was an age sufficient to be a judge. Servius Tullius excused gentlemen of above forty-seven years of age, from the fatigues of war: Augustus dismissed them at forty-five: though methinks it seems a little unreasonable that men should be sent home to their fire-sides, till fifty-five or sixty years of age. I should be of opinion, that our vocation and employment, should be as far as possible extended for the public good: but I think it a fault on the other hand, that we are not employed soon enough. This emperor was arbiter of the whole world at nineteen, and yet would have a man be thirty before he could be fit to bear the lowest office.

For my part, I believe our understandings are ripe at twenty, such as they ought to be, and ever will be capable of. A mind that did not by that time give evident earnest of its force,† never after gave proof of it. Natural parts and excellences produce what they have of vigorous and fine by that term or never.

They say in Dauphiny :

\* Suetonius, in the Life of Augustus, sect. 32.

† It is observable, says Philip de Comines, that all men whoever became great or performed great actions, began very young, and this is owing to education, or else the grace of God, lib. i. cap. 10, at the end.



*Se l'espino non picquo quan nai,  
A peno que piquo giamai.*

“ If the thorn does not prick then, it will scarce ever prick.”

What age  
is capable  
of the finest  
actions.

Of all the great actions of man I ever heard or read of, of what sort soever, I have observed, both in former ages and our own, more performed before the age of thirty than after; and often too in the lives of the very same men. May I not safely instance in those of Hannibal, and his great adversary Scipio? The better half of their lives, they lived upon the glory they had acquired in their youth; they were great men after, it is true, in comparison of others; but by no means, in comparison of themselves. As to my own part, I do certainly believe, that, since that age, both my understanding and my constitution have rather decayed than improved, and declined rather than advanced. It is possible, that with those who make the best use of their time, knowledge and experience may increase with their years; but the vivacity, quickness, and steadiness, and other parts of us, of much greater importance, and much more essentially our own, languish and decay:

————— *Ubi jam validis quassatum est viribus ævi,  
Corpus, et obtusis ceciderunt viribus artus,  
Claudicat ingenium, delirat linguaque mensque.\**

When once the body's shaken by Time's rage,  
The blood and vigour ebbing into age,  
No more the mind its former strength displays,  
But ev'ry sense perceptibly decays.

Sometimes the body first submits to age, sometimes the soul; and I have seen some, whose brains have failed them and had a weakness before their stomach and legs: and as it is a disease of no great pain to the patient, and of obscure symptoms, the greater is the danger. For this reason, I disapprove of our laws, not that they keep us too long to our work,

\* Lucret. lib. iii. ver. 452.

but that they set us at work too late. For the frailty of life considered, and to how many common and natural shocks it is exposed, methinks we should not spend so great a part of it in squabbles about birth-right, in idleness, and in education.

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## CHAPTER LVIII.

### *Of the Inconstancy of our Actions.*

THEY who apply themselves to the critical inspection of human actions, are in nothing so much perplexed as how to reconcile them, and set them off with equal lustre; for in general these so strangely contradict one another, that it seems impossible they should proceed from one and the same person. We find the younger Marius one while a son of Mars, and another the son of Venus. Pope Boniface VIII. is said to have entered on the papacy like a fox, to have behaved in it like a lion, and to have died like a dog. And who could believe it to be the same Nero, that perfect image of cruelty, who, when the sentence passed upon a criminal was brought to him in form to sign it, cried out, "Would to God I had never been taught to write!"\* So much it went to his heart to condemn a man to death. All history is so full of the like instances, nay, every man is able to furnish himself with so many out of his own practice, that I sometimes wonder to see men of understanding give themselves the trouble of reconciling such inconsistencies, considering that irresolution seems to me to be the most common and manifest vice of our nature; witness the famous verse of Publius the mimic:

\* Vellem nescire literas. Senec. de Clementia, lib. ii. cap. 1.

*Malum consilium est quod mutari non potest.\**

Bad is the counsel which cannot be changed.

The difficulty of determining the characters of men in general.

There is some probability of forming a judgment of a man from his most common course of life; but considering the natural instability of our manners and opinions, I have often thought even our best authors wrong in endeavouring, with so much obstinacy, to make us all of a piece, or consistent. They pitch upon the general air of a man, and, according to that appearance, endeavour to range and interpret all his actions, and, if they cannot twist them to a tolerable uniformity, they impute them to dissimulation. Augustus has escaped their memory; for in this man there was so manifest, sudden, and continual a variety of actions throughout his life, that he is slipped away entire and uncensured by the boldest critics. There is nothing I am so hardly induced to believe as a man's constancy, and believe nothing more readily than his inconstancy. He that would judge of a man particularly, distinctly, and take him to pieces, would oftener be sure of speaking truth. It is a hard matter, out of all antiquity, to pick a dozen men who have passed their lives in one certain constant course, which is the principal aim of wisdom. For, to comprise all in one word, says an ancient author, and to collect all the rules of human life into one, is to "will the same thing always, and always not to will it.† I need not add this small exception, provided that what thou wilt be right; for, if it be not right, the same thing cannot always please any one." I have, indeed, formerly learned, that vice is nothing but the want of rule and measure, and by consequence it is impossible to fix constancy to it. It is reported to be a saying of Demosthenes, that the beginning of all virtue is consultation and deliberation; and the end and perfection of it, constancy. If we would set out

\* Ex Publii Mimis, apud A. Gell. lib. xvii. c. 14.

† Senec. ep. 20.

upon a certain course, after mature deliberation, we should take the best way ; but nobody has thought on it :

*Quod petiit, spernit ; repetit quod nuper omisit,  
Æstuat, et vitæ disconvenit ordine toto.\**

He now despises what he late did crave,  
And what he last neglected, now would have :  
He fluctuates, and flies from that to this,  
And his whole life a contradiction is.

Our ordinary practice is to follow the inclinations of our appetites, be it to the right or to the left, upwards or downwards, according as we are impelled by occasions. We never consider of what we would have till the instant we would have it, and are as changeable as that animal which receives its colour from what place soever it is laid upon. What we just now proposed to ourselves, we immediately alter, and presently recur to it ; which is nothing but wavering and inconstancy :

The inconstancy of our conduct, on what founded.

*Ducimur ut nervis alienis mobile lignum.†*

Like tops, with leather thongs, we're whipp'd about.

We do not go of ourselves, but are driven just like things that float on the water, sometimes slowly, at other times swiftly, according to the rapidity or gentleness of the stream :

— *Nonne videmus*

*Quid sibi quisque velit nescire, et quærere semper,  
Commutare locum, quasi onus deponere possit ?‡*

Day after day we see men toil to find  
Some secret solace to an anxious mind,  
Shifting from place to place, if here or there  
They might set down the burden of their care.

Every day a new whim starts, and our humours change with the times :

\* Horat. ep. i. lib. i. ver. 98, 99.

† Idem, lib. ii. sat. 7, ver. 82.

‡ Lucret. lib. iii. ver. 1070, &c.

*Tales sunt hominum mentes, quali pater ipse  
Jupiter arctifero lustravit lumine terras.\**

As are the days and weather, fair or foul,  
Just such the motions of th' inconstant soul.

We fluctuate between various opinions,† we will nothing freely, nothing absolutely, nothing constantly. In a person who had prescribed and established determinate rules for his own conduct, we should see an equality of behaviour, a settled order, and a never-failing connection of things, one with another, shine in every part of his life. (Empedocles observed this inconsistency in the Agrigentines,‡ that they abandoned themselves to voluptuousness, as if every day was to be their last, and built as if they were never to die.) The discussion of this point would be very easy, as it is visible in the younger Cato; he that has touched one key, touches all: it is a harmony of very according sounds, wherein there is not one jarring string; but with us it is quite the reverse; every particular action must have a particular judgment, wherein the surest way to steer, in my opinion, would be to take our measures from the nearest allied circumstances, without engaging in a longer disquisition, and without drawing any other consequence from it.

A young woman, of a dubious character, throws herself out of a window for fear of being ravished.

During the civil disorders of our poor kingdom, I was told that a maid, hard by the place where I then was, threw herself out of a window, to avoid being ravished by a common soldier that was quartered in the house. She was not killed by the fall, and therefore, in order to pursue her design, she attempted to cut her throat, but was hindered in it; nevertheless, she was so dangerously wounded, that she confessed the soldier had not as yet importuned her, otherwise than by courtship, solicitations, and presents, but she was afraid that at last he would

\* Cicer. Fragm. Poemat. lib. x.

† Senec. epist. 52.

‡ Diog. Laert. on the Life of Empedocles, lib. viii. sect. 63. Elian ascribes this passage to Plato, Var. Hist. lib. xii. cap. 29.

have proceeded to violence ; and this she delivered with such an accent and aspect, as, together with her effusion of blood, gave such a testimony of her virtue, that she appeared perfectly like another Lucretia : and yet I have been very well assured, that, both before and since, she proved not so hard-hearted. Therefore, as the story says, though you are ever so handsome, and ever so much of the gentleman, because you have miscarried in your point, do not immediately conclude your mistress to be inviolably chaste, since you are not sure but she may have a secret kindness for the man that looks after your mules.

Antigonus, having taken a fancy to one of his soldiers for his gallant bravery, ordered his physicians to attend him for an inward ailment that had long tormented him ; and perceiving, after he was cured, that he went much more coldly to work than before, he asked him, Who or what had so altered him ? “ Yourself, sir,” said he, “ in having eased me of the pains, which made me so weary of my life that I did not value it.” \*

A soldier who lost all his valour on his being cured of a distemper.

A soldier of Lucullus, having been robbed by the enemy, revenged himself on them by a gallant exploit ; and, when he had made himself amends, Lucullus, having conceived a good opinion of him, would fain have employed him in some desperate enterprise, and, for that purpose, made use of all the most plausible arguments he could think of :

A soldier of Lucullus inspired with courage by being robbed.

*Verbis quæ timido quoque possent addere mentem.†*

Words which would animate the rankest coward.

Pray, said he, employ some miserable plundered soldier in that undertaking :

—*quantumvis rusticus, ibit,  
Ibit ed, quod vis, qui zonam perdidit, inquit.‡*

\* Plutarch, in the Life of Pelopidas, ch. 1.

† Hor. lib. ii. epist. 2, ver. 36.

‡ Id. ibid. ver. 40.

Seek some poor wretch that bends the suppliant knee,  
Your counsel ne'er shall be pursu'd by me.

and absolutely refused to go. When we read, that Mahomet having severely reprimanded Chasan, the commander of his janizaries, for cowardice, when he saw the Hungarians break into his troops; and that Chasan, without any other answer, rushed furiously, by himself, with his drawn scymetar, into the first body of the enemy that advanced, where he was immediately cut to pieces: this, perhaps, was not so much to vindicate himself from the reproach as the effect of a second thought; nor so much natural courage as a sudden sally of anger. He that you saw so adventurous yesterday, do not think it strange if you find him, next day, as great a poltroon: anger, necessity, or company, or wine, or the sound of a trumpet had roused his spirits. This was not courage formed by reason, but established by some or other of those circumstances; and therefore no wonder, if, by other contrary circumstances, it become quite another thing. These variations and contradictions, so manifest in us, have induced some persons to think, that we have two souls, others, two distinct powers, that always accompany and animate us, each after its own manner, the one to do good, the other to do-civil; it being hardly possible, that two qualities, so contrary to each other, could associate in one subject.

The mind  
of man is  
Inconstant  
and change-  
able.

The wind of every accident not only puffs me along with it, which way soever it blows, but, moreover, I disturb and trouble myself by the unsettledness of my posture; and whoever nicely considers it, will hardly find himself twice in the very same state. I give my mind sometimes one hue, sometimes another, according to the side I lie on. If I speak variously of myself, it is because I consider myself in different lights, as having all contrarieties within me, in their turn and measure; bashful, insolent, chaste, licentious, talkative, taciturn, laborious, delicate, ingenious, stupid, morose, complaisant, &

liar, a true speaker, learned, ignorant, covetous, liberal, and prodigal: all these I perceive within me, more or less, according as I turn myself; and whoever studies himself attentively, finds this unsteadiness and discordance in himself, even by his own judgment. I have nothing to say of myself entirely, simply, and solidly; or, in one word, without mixture and confusion. *Distinguo* is the most universal member of my logic.

Though I always intend to speak well of that which is good, and rather to put the best construction upon such things as may fall out; yet such is the strangeness of our condition, that we are often prompted, even by vice itself, to do well, if well-doing were not judged by the intention only. A man, therefore, ought not to be deemed valiant from one gallant action singly, for the truly brave man would be so always, and upon all occasions. If it were a habit of valour, and not a flash or sally, it would render a man equally resolute in every accident; the same alone, and in company; the same in the lists, as in the field of battle: for let them say what they will, the valour in the tilt-yard and in the field, is one and the same. The man of true valour would bear a fit of sickness in his bed, with the same courage as a wound in battle, and no more fear death in his own house, than in an attack or storming of a castle. The man who enters the breach with a gallant resolution, would not vex himself, at another time, like a woman, for the loss of a law-suit, or the death of a child. When a man bears poverty with courage, though he is infamous for cowardice: when he stands intrepid against the sword of the enemy, while he trembles at the sight of a barber's razor; the action is commendable, not the man. "There are many Grecians," says Cicero, "that cannot face an enemy, who bear sickness with fortitude:" the Cimbrians and Celtiberians are noted for quite

\* Cic. Tusc. Quest. lib. ii. cap. 27.



“ the contrary. *Nihil enim potest esse æquabile quod non a certa ratione proficiscatur*: i. e. Nothing can be uniform which does not proceed from solid reason.”

The valour of Alexander, though extraordinary in its kind, yet not perfect and universal.

There is no valour more extraordinary, in its kind, than that of Alexander; but it is only in its kind, not perfect enough in every particular, nor universal. Incomparable as it is, it has, nevertheless, some blemishes. On this account it happened that he was so often in a desperate rage, upon the slightest suspicions of conspiracies by his own soldiers against his life; and that he behaved, in the detection of them, with so much vehemence and indiscreet injustice, and with a timidity that subverted his natural reason. The superstition also, with which he was so much tainted, savours a little of pusillanimity; and his excessive penitence for the murder of Clytus, is likewise a testimony that his courage was not always the same. All we perform is no other than patch-work, and we aim at acquiring honour by false tokens.

Virtue only to be courted for its own sake.

Virtue does not require to be courted but for its own sake; and, if it sometimes lends its mask for another occasion, it presently plucks it again from the borrower's face. It is a strong and lively dye, with which when the soul is once tintured, it never goes off but with the piece. Therefore, in order to make a judgment of a man, we must trace his life critically for a long while past. If constancy has not therein kept its ground on its own basis, *Cui vivendi via considerata atque provisæ est* :\* so that he be resolutely determined to a certain course of life; if the variety of occurrences makes him alter his pace (his path I mean, for the pace may be either faster or slower), let him go; such a one, according to the motto of our Talbot, “ is driven with the wind.”

It is no wonder, says one of the ancients,† that chance has so great a power over us, since it is by

\* Cicero Paradoxon. v. cap. 1.

† Senec. epist. 71, from whence this whole paragraph is taken.

chance that we live. It is not possible for any one, who has not directed his life, in the general, to some certain aim, regularly to dispose of its particular actions. It is impossible for any one to fit the parts together, who has not the form of the whole already in his head. To what purpose does the man provide colours, who knows not what he is to paint? No one lays down a certain plan for his life; and we deliberate only by a little and a little at a time. The archer ought, in the first place, to know at what he is to take aim, and then to accommodate his hand, bow-string, his arrow, and the motions to it. Our counsels err, because they have no end nor direction. No wind serves him who is bound to no certain port.

I cannot acquiesce in the judgment passed in favour of Sophocles, by the person, who, because he had seen one of his tragedies, argued from thence, that he was capable of the management of domestic affairs, against the accusation of his son. Neither do I think the conjecture of the Parians,\* who were sent to regulate the Milesians, could warrant the consequence which they inferred from it. Upon their visit to the island they took notice of the lands that were best cultivated, and the country farms that were best managed; and having registered the names of their occupiers, as soon as they had assembled the citizens together, they nominated these farmers for their governors and magistrates, imagining, that they who were so careful in the management of their private affairs, would be so of the public.† We are all such a rude medley of compounds, and those of so various a contexture, that every piece plays every moment its own game; and we are as different from our own selves as we are from each other:‡ *Magnam rem puta, unum hominem agere*: i. e. "It is no little matter to act the part of one man only well." Since ambition can teach men valour, temperance,

Whether the judgment in favour of Sophocles, and certain Milesians, was well founded.

\* Gic. de Senect. cap. 7. † Herod. lib. v. p. 339. ‡ Senec. ep. 120.

and liberality, nay, and justice too: since avarice can inspire the courage of an apprentice-boy, the fondling of his mother, with the assurance to expose himself, so far from home, to the mercy of the waves, and the wrath of Neptune, in a frail boat, and that it also teaches discretion and prudence; and since Venus even inspires boys, under the discipline of the rod, with resolution and audaciousness, and makes viragoes of virgins while in their mother's laps:

*Hac duce custodes furtim transgressa jacentes,  
Ad juvenem tenebris sola puella venit.\**

With Venus' aid, while sleep the guard disarms,  
She stole by night to her young lover's arms.

It is not in the sphere of the maturest understanding to judge of us simply by our external actions; it must fathom the very soul, and find out the springs that give it motion; but, as this is a dangerous and sublime undertaking, I wish that fewer persons would attempt it.

## CHAPTER LIX.

### *Of Drunkenness.*

There are  
some vices  
more enor-  
mous than  
others.

THROUGHOUT the whole world there is nothing but variety and disparity; vices are all alike, as they are vices; and the Stoics, perhaps, are of the same opinion; but though they are equally vices, yet they are not such in an equal degree; and that he who has gone a hundred yards beyond the limits,

*Quos ultra citraque nequit consistere rectum,†*

is not in a worse state, or more out of the way, than he who has gone but ten yards from the said limits;

\* Tibul. lib. ii. eleg. 1, ver. 75, 76. † Horat. lib. i. sat. 1, ver. 107.

is a thing not to be believed; nor that sacrilege is not a worse crime than stealing a cabbage out of a garden :

*Nec vincet ratio tantundem ut peccet, idemque,  
Ut teneros caules alieni fregerit horti,  
Et qui nocturnus divum sacra legerit.\**

Both acts are theft, yet sure the guilt is more  
To rob the church's than the garden's store.

In this there is as wide a difference as in any other thing. To confound the degree and measure of sins is dangerous; murderers, traitors, and tyrants are too great gainers by it. It is not right, that they should quiet their consciences because such a person is idle, another lascivious, or not so assiduous in his devotions: every one aggravates the guilt of his companion, and extenuates his own. Our instructors themselves, in my opinion, often confound the degrees of it. As Socrates said, that the principal office of wisdom was to distinguish good from evil; so we, of whom the best of us are always vicious, ought to say the same of the knowledge of distinguishing vices, without which, and that very perfect too, the virtuous and the wicked remain confounded and unknown.

Now, among the rest, drunkenness seems to me a stupid, brutal vice. The understanding has a greater share in other vices, and there are some which, if a man may say it, have something generous in them. There are some in which there is a mixture of knowledge, diligence, valour, prudence, dexterity, and cunning; whereas this is altogether corporeal and terrestrial: and the most stupid of all nations† existing at this day is the only one that keeps it in countenance. Other vices, indeed, disturb the understanding, but this totally overthrows it, and locks up all the senses :

\* Horat. lib. i. sat. 3, ver. 114, &c.

† The particular nation, here pointed at by Montaigne, might easily toss back the ball.

— *Cum vini vis penetravit,  
Consequitur gravitas membrorum, præpediuntur  
Crura vacillanti, tardescit lingua, madet mens.  
Nant oculi, clamor, singultus, jurgia gliscunt.\**

When fumes of wine have fill'd the swelling veins,  
Unusual weight throughout the body reigns;  
The legs, so nimble in the race before,  
Can now exert their wonted pow'r no more;  
Falters the tongue, tears gush into the eyes,  
And hiccoughs, noise, and jarring tumults rise.

The worst estate of man is that in which he loses the knowledge and government of himself: and it is said, amongst other things upon the subject, that as must or wort, fermenting in a vessel, drives up every thing that is at the bottom to the top, so wine makes those who drink it intemperately blab out the greatest secrets to another :

*Tu sapientium  
Curas, et arcanum jocosum,  
Consilium retegis Lyæo.† ✕*

The secret cares and counsels of the wise  
Are known, when you to Bacchus sacrifice.

Josephus tells us, that he wormed out a secret from an ambassador whom his enemies had sent to him, by making him drunk. Nevertheless, Augustus having imparted his most secret affairs in confidence to Lucius Piso, who conquered Thrace, was never mistaken in him,† no more than Tiberius was in Cossius, to whom he intrusted all his designs, though we know they were so much given to wine, that both were often forced to be carried drunk out of the senate : §

*Hesterno inflatum venas de more Lyæo. ||*

Their veins, according to custom, being filled by yesterday's debauch.

The design to assassinate Cæsar was as safely com-

\* Lucret. lib. iii. ver. 475, &c.

† Horat. lib. iii. ode 21, ver. 14, &c.

§ Idem, ibid.

‡ Senec. ep. 83.

|| Virg. eclog. vi. ver. 15.

municated to Cimber, though he was often drunk, as it was to Cassius, who drank nothing but water : and, upon this, Cimber once said, merrily, " Shall I, who " cannot bear wine, bear with a tyrant ? " \*

We see our Germans, when drunk as the devil, remember their post, the word for the day, and their rank :

*Nec facilis victoria de madidis et †  
Blæsis, atque mero titubantibus.†*

Nor is it easy to enforce command

O'er men so drunk, they scarce can speak or stand,

German soldiers, though such hard drinkers, not easily conquered.

I could never have believed there had been in the world such profound drunkenness, even to a degree of suffocation and death, if I had not read in history what follows, viz. That Attalus having, to put a flagrant affront upon him, invited to supper the same Pausanias who afterwards killed Philip of Macedon (a king whose excellent qualities bore testimony to the education which he had received in the house and company of Epanrinondas), he made him drink to such a pitch, that he was so void of sense as to prostitute his person, like a common hedge-whore, to the mule-keepers and servants of the meanest office in the house. I have been farther told by a lady, whom I highly honour and esteem, that, near Bourdeaux, towards Castres, where she lives, a country-woman, a widow of chaste repute, perceiving in herself the first symptoms of pregnancy, said to her neighbours, that, if she had a husband, she should think herself with child : but the cause of this suspicion increasing more and more every day, so that at length there was a manifest proof of

Instances and inconveniences of profound drunkenness.

\* Senec. ep. 83. The words in Seneca are, *Ego quemquam feram qui vinum ferre non possum?* But he has spoiled Cimber's jest for not having had the courage to give Cæsar the name of tyrant, as Montaigne does.

† Montaigne, in order to illustrate this remarkable fact, has made use of these lines, which, however, have a different meaning in Juvenal.

‡ Juv. sat. xv. ver. 47, 48.

it, the poor woman was fain to have it published in her parish-church, that whoever was conscious he had done the deed, and would freely confess it, she promised to forgive him, and not only so, but, if he liked the motion, to marry him. Upon this a young fellow that used to do husbandry-work for her in the field, encouraged by this publication, declared he found her upon a certain holiday, when she had been too free with her bottle, so fast asleep on the hearth, by her fire-side, and in so indecent a posture, that he made use of her body without waking her; and they live together as man and wife.

Drunken-  
ness not  
much de-  
clained a-  
gainst by  
the anti-  
quists.

It is certain, that the ancient writers have not de-  
clained very much against this vice; nay, the  
writings of many philosophers speak of it very ten-  
derly; and even among the Stoics there are some  
who advise a hearty carouse, now and then, to cheer  
up the spirits :

*Hoc quoque virtutum quondam certamine magnum  
Socratem palmam promeruisse ferunt.\**

And Socrates, they say, in days of yore,  
From toping blades the palm of drinking bore.

That censor and corrector of others, Cato, lies  
under the reproach of having been also a hard  
drinker :

*Narratur et prisce Catonis  
Sæpe mero culuisse virtus.†*

Of Cato 'tis said, whose virtues yet shine,  
That he often indulged in generous wine.

The renowned Cyrus, amongst other commend-  
able qualities for which he claimed a preference be-  
fore his brother Artaxerxes, urged this excellency,  
that he could drink a great deal more than his  
brother.‡ And in nations the best regulated, and  
the most civilised, this trial of skill in drinking was

\* Corn. Gall. eleg. i. ver. 47.

† Horat. lib. iii. ode 21, ver. 11, 12.

‡ Plutarch, in the Life of Artaxerxes, cap. 2.

very much in use. I have heard Sylvius, an eminent physician of Paris, say, that lest the digestive faculties of the stomach should grow weak, it is good, once a month, to invigorate them by this excess, and to stimulate them, that they may not be benumbed : and they write, that the Persians used to consult about their most important affairs after being well warmed with wine.

My taste and constitution are greater enemies to this vice than my reason ; for, besides that I easily submit my belief to the opinions of the ancients, I think it, indeed, an unmanly and a stupid vice, but not so wicked and mischievous as the other vices, which do almost directly tend to the bane of public society. And though we cannot please ourselves with the thought that it is of no expense to us, yet I believe that this vice sits lighter upon the conscience than others ; besides that, it is of no difficult preparation, nor hard to be found, a consideration not to be despised.

A man who was advanced both in dignity and age, among three principal advantages which he said remained to him in life, reckoned this for one ; and where would a man wish to find it more justly than amongst the natural advantages ? But he did not take it in a right light ; for delicacy and a curiosity in the choice of wines is to be avoided. If nothing will please you but drinking of the richest wine, you oblige yourself to the mortification of drinking that which is not so ; your taste must be more indifferent and free ; so nice a palate will never qualify you for a good toper. The Germans drink almost of all wines alike with pleasure : their end is not so much to taste as to swallow ; and, indeed, they have their pleasure cheaper than others, since they have their wine in much more plenty, and nearer at hand.

In the next place, to drink as the French do at two meals only, and then with moderation, is to be too sparing of the favours of the god of wine ; there is more time and constancy required than that comes



The ancients spent whole nights in drinking. Whether we are ever the better for being more wary in that respect,

to. The ancients spent whole nights at this exercise, and often all the next day; and, therefore, their set meals were, to be sure, more plentiful, and more substantial. I have seen a great lord, in my time, a personage in great employments, and very successful, who, without setting himself to it, but only in the common course of his meals, drank not much less than five bottles of wine at a time, and, at his going away, appeared but too sober and wary, to our cost. The pleasure which we choose to prefer, for our life, ought to take up more of its time: we should, like shop-boys and working-men, refuse no opportunity of drinking, but always wish for it. It looks as if the longer we live, the less we drink; and that the breakfasts, repasts, carousals, and collations I used to see at our houses, when I was a boy, were more frequent and common than now. Are we a jot the farther advanced towards an amendment? Truly no. But, perhaps, we are more addicted to the sports of Venus than our ancestors were: they are two exercises that thwart and hinder one another in their vigour; as intemperance has taken off the edge of our appetite on the one hand, sobriety serves, on the other, to render us more spruce and more keen for the exercise of love.

The description and character of Montaigne's father.

What strange stories have I heard my father tell of the chastity of the age wherein he lived! He was well qualified to speak of the subject, being formed, both by art and nature, for an acquaintance with the ladies. He spoke little, but well, ever mixing his language with some ornament borrowed from authors most in use, especially the Spanish, and, amongst the Spanish, from the book entitled *Marcus Aurelius*,\* which was familiar to him. In his behaviour

\* Mery Causaubon, who mentions this book, in a short advertisement prefixed to his English translation of the genuine work of the emperor Marcus Aurelius, tells us this book was written originally in Spanish, and translated into Italian, French, English, &c. "The author," he adds, "would fain have his work pass for a faithful translation of the treatise of Marcus Aurelius; but there is no-

he was humble and very modest, with an engaging gravity, and was particularly nice as to neatness and decency, both in his person and clothes, whether on foot or on horseback. He was wonderfully punctual in keeping his word, and both his conscience and religion, in general, inclined rather to superstition than to the other extreme. For a little man, he was vigorous, straight, and well-proportioned; had a pleasing countenance, inclining to a brown complexion, and was adroit and perfect in all the noble exercises. I have even seen canes filled with lead, with which, it is said, he exercised his arms, in order to fit himself for throwing the bar, or stones, or for fencing, and shoes with leaden soles, to make him the lighter afterwards for running and leaping. Of his vaulting he has left some memorandums, which are somewhat miraculous. I saw him, when he was past sixty years of age, make a mere jest of our activity, throw himself, in his fur gown, into the saddle, turn himself round a table upon his thumb, and he scarce ever went up into his chamber without measuring three or four stairs by one step. As to what I was saying just now, he declared there was scarce one woman of quality of ill fame in a whole province. He told of strange privacies, some of them his own, with virtuous women, without any manner of suspicion. And, for his own part, he solemnly swore he came as pure as a virgin to his marriage-bed, and yet it was after having long served in the wars beyond the mountains, of which he has left a journal, of his own hand-writing, wherein he has given a regular and very-circumstantial account of all passages both relating to the public and to himself: and he was married in the year 1528, at the

“ thing, in the whole book, which shows that the learned Spaniard, “ who composed it, had seen the treatise of this wise emperor.” This Spaniard is Guevara, who does not deserve the title of learned, which is here given him by Mery Causaubon. The reader may see the character of his wit and works in Bayle’s Dictionary, under the title of *Guevara*.

mature age of thirty-three, as he was on the road coming home from Italy.

Drinking  
is the last  
pleasure  
which man  
is capable  
of enjoy-  
ing.

We will now return to our bottle. The infirmities of old age, which have need of some support and refreshment, might well create in me a desire of the power to take my bottle; for it is, in a manner, the last pleasure which a long course of years steals from us. The natural heat, as the good fellows say, first takes place in the feet, and that is in the state of infancy; from thence it ascends to the middle region, where it settles a long time, and produces what I think the only true pleasure which the body is capable of feeling, and in comparison of which all other pleasures are languid; at length, like a vapour which exhales itself as it ascends, it rises to the throat, which is its last stage. Nevertheless, I cannot understand where is the pleasure of drinking beyond quenching thirst, and how a man can forge, in his imagination, an appetite that is artificial and against nature. My stomach would not bear so much, it having enough to do to digest what it takes in out of mere necessity. My constitution will not admit of drinking, but after eating, and for this reason my last draught is always the largest: and because in old age our palates are furred with phlegm, or vitiated by some other badness of constitution, wine seems fitter for us, as our pores are thereby laid open and cleansed; at least I very seldom relish the first glass well. Anacharsis\* was amazed that the Greeks should drink larger glasses at the end of a meal than at the beginning; but I suppose they did it for the same reason as the Germans do; who then begin their drinking-bout.

The use of  
wine denied  
to children,  
and  
permitted  
to men  
grown.

Plato† will not allow that children should drink wine before the age of eighteen, and that any man should be drunk with it before forty; but after forty he gives them leave to indulge themselves in it, and

\* Diogenes Laertius, in the Life of Anacharsis, lib. i. sect. 104.

† De Legibus, lib. ii. p. 581.

to take a pretty large dose, at their feasts, of the essence of Dionysius,\* that good deity, who restores gaiety to the countenance, and youth to old men; who soothes and softens the passions of the soul, as iron is softened by the fire; and who, in his laws, allows such drinking-matches to be useful (provided there be a chairman or president to restrain and regulate them), drunkenness being a clear and certain trial of every person's temper, and withal fit to inspire those in years with spirit to divert themselves in dancing and music, things of great use, and which they have not the spirit to attempt when sober. Plato says farther, that wine is capable of giving temperance to the soul, and health to the body.

Nevertheless, these reflections, partly borrowed from the Carthaginians, please him, viz. That it be sparingly used in expeditions of war.† That every magistrate and every judge‡ abstain from it when he is doing the business of his office, or about to hold a council on public affairs. That they should not drink wine by day,§ which ought to be devoted to other business; nor that night|| in which it is proposed to get children.

Restrictions required in the use of wine.

They say that Stilpo the philosopher, when oppressed with age, actually hastened his end by drinking pure wine;¶ and that the like cause, though not with the same design, dispatched also the philosopher

Pure wine an enemy to old age. The most regular souls liable

\* One of the names of Bacchus.

† This construction, of using it "sparingly," is according to some editions, particularly that from which Mr. Cotton translated, but it should have been, that "they wholly abstain from wine;" for Plato says, that he approves the Carthaginian law, which orders, that no sort of wine be drank in the camp, nor any thing but water. De Legibus, lib. ii. towards the end.

‡ Or, as it is said, more properly, in Plato, during the year of their magistracy. Idem, *ibid.*

§ Except, says Plato, it be by way of exercise, or in case of sickness.

|| This exception includes both sexes, supposing them to give each other the word.

¶ Diog. Laert. in the Life of Stilpo, lib. ii. sect. 120.

to be dis-  
ordered by  
various ac-  
cidents.

Arcesilaus,\* whose strength was also much decayed by age.

But it is an old and a pleasant question, Whether a wise man is to be overcome by the strength of wine?

*Si † munitæ adhibet vim sapientiæ? †*

To what a degree of vanity are we puffed by that good opinion which we have of ourselves! The most regular and perfect soul in the world has but too much ado to keep its footing, lest it be overthrown by its own weakness: there is not one of a thousand that is right and settled a moment in a whole life; and it may be a question, whether, in the state of nature, it can ever be: but to join constancy to it is its utmost perfection; I mean, though nothing should discompose it, which a thousand accidents are capable of doing. That great poet Lucretius fenced himself about with his philosophy to a fine purpose, when, behold, he was put out of his senses by one philtre or love potion! Is it to be imagined, that an apoplexy will not stun a Socrates as much as a porter? The violence of a distemper has made some people forget their own names, and a slight wound has turned the brains of others. Be a man ever so wise, he is still but a man, than whom what is there more frail, more wretched, and more nothing? Wisdom does not force our natural dispositions:

*Sudores itaque et pallorem existere toto  
Corpore, et infringi linguam, vocemque aboriri,  
Caligare oculos, sonere aures, succidere artus,  
Demque concidere ex animi terrore videmus. §*

Paleness and sweat the fearful man confounds,  
The tongue's deliver'd of abortive sounds;  
The eyes wax dim, ears deaf, the knees grow lame,  
Unable to support the trembling frame;  
And all things fall to nothing, whence they came.

\* Diog. Laert. in the Life of Arcesilaus, lib. iv. sect. 44.

† Whether it is possible to be merry and wise. This is a parody rather than a quotation.

‡ Horat. lib. iii. od. 28, ver. 4.

§ Lucret. lib. iii. ver. 155, &c.

He cannot help winking at the blow that threatens him, and trembling, when at the edge of a precipice, like a child; nature having reserved to herself these slight tokens of her authority, which are not to be forced by our reason, nor by the virtue of the Stoics, to convince man of his mortality and infirmity; he turns pale with fear, red with shame, and he groans with the colic, if not with a voice loud and raving, yet, at least, with one that is weak and broken:

*Humani\* a se nihil alienum putet.†*

Let him not think he's safe from human ills.

The poets, who feign every thing according to their fancy, dare not so much as exempt their heroes from tears:

*Sic fatur lacrymans, classique immittit habenas.‡*

Thus did he weeping say, and then set sail.

It is enough for a man to curb and moderate his inclinations, for to banish them is not in his power. Even our Plutarch, so perfect and excellent a judge of human actions as he was, when he sees Brutus and Torquatus murder their own children, began to doubt whether virtue could extend so far, and whether those personages were not rather stimulated by some other passion. All actions that exceed the ordinary bounds are liable to sinister interpretations; forasmuch as our taste can no more relish what is above it, than what is below it.

Let us leave this other sect,§ which makes a plain profession of scornfulness: but when, even in that

*Instances of  
a constancy which*

\* This is not the true sense of Terence's words. Montaigne only uses it here to express his own thought, by taking a liberty very common with him, as I have already observed, and as will appear to all who will be at the trouble to compare his quotations with their originals; and which, indeed, they ought to do, if they would be sensible of the beauty of the applications which he makes of them at every turn.

† Terence's *Heautontimoroumenos*, act. i. sc. 1, ver. 25.

‡ *Æneid*. lib. vi. ver. 1.

§ The Stoic sect, founded by Zeno.

VOL. I.

2 G

savour of  
fury, ac-  
cording to  
Mon-  
taigne.

sect, which is reckoned the mildest,\* we hear those rhodomontades of Metrodorus, *Occupavi te, Fortuna,† atque cepi, omnesque aditus tuos interclusi, ut ad me aspirare non posses*: i. e. "Fortune, thou art mine, I have thee fast, and have ~~so~~ shut up all thy avenues, that thou canst not come at me:" when Anaxarchus being, by order of Nicocreon, the tyrant of Cyprus, put into a stone mortar, and pounded with an iron pestle, called out incessantly, "Batter, break, it is not Anaxarchus, it is his *sheath* that you pound so."‡ When we hear our martyrs cry out to the tyrant, from the midst of the flames, "That side is roasted enough;§ slice it out, and eat it; it is quite done, fall to work with the other side." When we read, in Josephus, of that child, whose flesh was pulled to pieces by pinchers, defying his raving persecutor Antiochus to do his worst, and calling out with a manly intrepid voice, "Tyrant, thou lovest time, I am still at ease; where is that pain, where those torments with which thou didst threaten me? Is this all thou canst do? My constancy gives thee more anguish than I suffer from thy cruelty. O pitiful coward! thou faintest, and I grow stronger. Make me complain; make me bend; make me yield if thou canst. Encourage thy guards and thy executioners; behold they are faint-hearted, and can do no more: arm them, enrage them." Really, it must be acknowledged that, in such souls as these, there is some transport, some fury, be it ever so divine. When we come to these Stoical sallies, "I had rather be mad than merry;" a saying of Antisthenes,|| *Μανίαν μάλλον ἢ ἡθίην*. When Sextius tells us, that

\* The sect of Epicurus.

† Cic. Tusc. Quæst. lib. i. cap. 9.

‡ Diog. Laert. in the Life of Anaxarchus, lib. ix. sect. 58, 59.

§ This is what Prudentius makes St. Laurence say, in his book entitled *apud cæcilianum*, concerning crowns. Hymn ii. ver. 401, &c.

|| Aul. Gell. lib. ix. cap. 5, and Diog. Laert. in Vita Antisthenia, lib. vi. sect. 3.

\* he had rather be chained to pain than pleasure :  
 When Epicurus, under pretence of being fond of the  
 gout, and refusing health and ease, gaily defies evils,  
 despising the lesser pains, as disdaining to contend  
 and struggle with them, he desires and calls out for  
 those that are acute, violent, and worthy of him :

*Spumantemque dari pecora inter inertia votis  
 Optat aprum, aut fulvum descendere monte leonem.\**

Impatiently he views the feeble prey,  
 Wishing some nobler beast to cross his way ;  
 There that his course the furious boar may bend,  
 Or tawny lion from the hills descend.

Who would not think that they are pushed on by a  
 courage broke loose from its hold ? Our soul cannot  
 reach so high from her own seat ; she must of neces-  
 sity quit it, raise herself up, and pushing on, right  
 or wrong, transport her man so far out of his lati-  
 tude, that afterwards he himself shall be astonished  
 at what he has done. As in war the heat of the bat-  
 tle often pushes the brave soldiers upon such hazard-  
 ous exploits, that, when they come to recollect, they  
 are the first who are astonished at them. Poets also  
 are often struck with admiration at their own works,  
 and know not where again to find the track in which  
 they performed so happy a career, which, in them,  
 is called rage and rapture : and, as Plato says,† that  
 it is to no purpose for a sedate man to knock at  
 the gates of poetry ; and Aristotle, that there is no  
 great wit without a mixture of madness ; so all  
 sallies, how commendable soever, which surpass our  
 own judgment and reason, may well be called folly ;  
 forasmuch as wisdom is a regular management of  
 our mind, which it conducts by rule and measure,  
 and is responsible for it to itself. Plato argues thus,\*  
 that the gift of prophecy being above our reach, we  
 must be out of our senses when we meddle with it,  
 and our prudence must be clouded either by sleep,

Man some-  
 times rais-  
 ed above  
 himself by  
 a kind of  
 enthusi-  
 asm.

\* *Æneid.* lib. iv. ver. 158, 159.

† *Sæcra de Tranquillitate Animi.*

† In *Timæus*, ver. 543.



or some disease, or lifted from its place by some celestial rapture.

## CHAPTER LX.

### *The Custom of the Isle of Cea, in the Ægean Sea, or Archipelago.*

Accidents  
worse to  
suffer than  
death.

IF to philosophise be, as they say, to doubt, much more ought my frolicksome and fanciful speculations to be termed doubting; for it is for learners to inquire and debate, and for those in the chair to determine. My moderator is the authority of the divine will, which regulates us without contradiction, and which is superior to such human and vain disputes. Philip being entered, with an armed force, into Peloponnesus, somebody said to Damindas, that the Lacedæmonians were like to suffer a great deal, if they did not regain his favour. "You poltroon," said he, "what can they suffer that are not afraid of death?"\* The question being also put to Agis, "How a man might live free?" "By despising death,"† said he. These and a thousand other sayings, that are to be met with to the same purpose, plainly hint something more than a patient waiting for death till it comes, for there are several accidents in life that are more intolerable than death; witness the Lacedæmonian lad, that was taken by Antigonus, and sold for a slave, who being commanded by his master to do something that was very mean, "Thou shalt see," said the boy, "whom thou hast bought;‡ it would be a scandal for me to be a slave, when my liberty is in my power;"

\* See the Notable Sayings of the Lacedæmonians, collected by Plutarch, under the word Damindas.

† Ibid. under the name of Agis.

‡ Plutarch, in the Notable Sayings of the Lacedæmonians.

and, when he had so said, he threw himself from the top of the house. Antipater threatening the Lacedæmonians severely, in order to force them to comply with a certain demand of his: "If thou dost threaten us with worse than death,"\* said they, "we shall be the more willing to die." And when Philip wrote word to them, that he would frustrate all their enterprises: "What!" said they, "wilt thou also hinder us from dying?" This is the meaning of that saying, "That the wise man lives as long as he ought, not as long as he can;"† and that the most obliging present which nature has made us, whereby we are deprived of any colour to complain of our present condition, is in having left us the key to slip away. She has ordered but one passage into life, but a hundred thousand ways out. We may be straitened for earth to live upon, but earth sufficient to die upon we can never want, as Boiocalus‡ made answer to the Romans. Why dost thou complain of this world? It does not detain thee: if thou livest in pain, thy own cowardice is the cause of it; there remains no more to die but to be willing to do it:

Several  
ways to get  
rid of life.

*Ubique mors est: optime hoc cavet Deus,  
Eripere vitam nemo non homini potest:  
At nemo mortem: mille ad hanc aditus patent,§*  
Tender of human woes, indulgent fate  
Has left to death an ever-open gate:  
There's not a person on the earth but may  
Take any fellow-creature's life away;  
And any man that will, may yield his breath:  
There are a thousand ways that lead to death.

Nor is this a recipe for one single disease only; death is the cure of all evils: "It is a most assured port, which is sometimes to be sought, and never to be shunned."|| It comes all to one, whether a

\* Plutarch, in the Notable Sayings of the Lacedæmonians.

† Senec. ep. 70.

‡ Tacit. Annal. lib. xiii.

§ Senec. Thebais, act. i. sc. 1, ver. 151, &c.

|| Senec. ep. 70.

man puts an end to himself, or suffers death from the hand of another ; \* whether he runs off before his day, or whether he stays till it arrives. From what quarter soever it come, he is still his own master ; in what part soever the thread breaks, it is all over, there is the end of the clue.

Death dependent on the will.

That is the best death which a man chooses voluntarily ; \* life depends on the will of another person, death upon our own : in nothing ought we so much to please our own humours as in that. Reputation is not at all affected by such an undertaking, and it is a folly to have regard to it. To live would be bondage, were it not for the liberty of dying. The ordinary methods of cure are carried on at the expense of life. We are tormented with caustics, incisions, amputations of our members ; our food, nay, our very blood is taken from us ; one step farther, † and we are cured indeed. Why is not the jugular vein as much at our disposal as the median vein (of the arm) ? Desperate diseases require desperate remedies. When Servius the grammarian had the gout, § he could think of no better remedy than to make an incision in his feet, and to put poison into the wound, not caring how gouty they were, provided they were insensible of pain. God gives us leave enough, when he reduces us to such a condition that to live is worse than to die. It is a weakness, indeed, to succumb under infirmities, but it is madness to nourish them. As I do not offend the laws against robbers, when I embezzle my own money, and cut my own purse ; nor that against incendiaries, when I burn my own wood ; so am I not under the lash of those made against murderers, for taking away my own life.

\* Senec. ep. 69.

† Idem, ep. 70.

‡ Non opus est vasto vulnere dividere prœcordia. Scalpello spiritur ad illam magnam libertatem via ; et puncto securitas constat. Senec. ep. 70.

§ Servitius Claudius, of Rome, Plin. Nat. Hist. lib. xxv. cap. 3, and Suetonius de illustribus Grammaticis, cap. 2 and 3.

Hegesias\* said, that the condition of death, as well as that of life, ought to be subject to our own choice. And Speusippus,† the philosopher, who had been long afflicted with the dropsy, and therefore used to be carried in a litter, meeting Diogenes, bid him "Good morrow;" but Diogenes said, "No good morrow to you, who can bear to live in such a state." It is true, indeed, that sometime after, Speusippus put himself to death, wearied out with such a painful condition of life.

But this does not pass without being controverted: for it is the opinion of many, that we are not to quit the garrison of the world without the express command of him who has placed us in it: that it appertains to God alone, who has sent us hither, not for our own sakes only, but for his glory, and the service of our fellow creatures; to dismiss us when it shall best please him, and that we are not to dismiss ourselves: that we are not born for ourselves only, but for our country also, to the laws of which we are accountable, and by which there lies an action against us for murder: or, if these fail to lay hold of us, we are to be punished in the other world, as deserters from our duty:

*Proxima deinde tenent mæsti loca, qui sibi lethum  
Insonles peperere manu, lucemque perosi  
Projecere animas.‡*

Next these the bodies of those men remain,  
Who innocent, by their own hands were slain;  
And, hating light, to voluntary death  
Renounce'd their eye-balls, and resign'd their breath.

There is much more constancy in wearing the chain by which we are bound, than in breaking it; and Regulus gave a greater proof of fortitude than Cato. It is indiscretion and impatience that hurry us out of the world. True virtue turns its back to no accidents. It seeks for misfortune and pain, as

\* Diog. Laert. in the Life of Aristippus, lib. ii. sect. 94.

† Idem, in the Life of Speusippus, lib. iv. sect. 3.

‡ Virg. Æneid. lib. vi. ver. 434, &c.

its aliment. The menaces of tyrants, racks, and tortures animate and rouse it :

*Duris ut ilex tona bipennibus,  
Nigræ feraci frondis in Alcido,  
Per damna, per cædes, ab ipso,  
Ducit opes animumque ferro.\**

That race, long toss'd upon the Tuscan waves,  
Are like an oak upon the wooden top  
Of shaded Algidus, bestrew'd with leaves,  
Which, as keen axes its green honours lop,  
Through wounds, through losses no decay can feel,  
Collecting strength and spirit from the steel.

And as another says,

*Non est, ut putas, virtus, pater,  
Timere vitam, sed malis ingentibus  
Obstare, nec se vertere ac retro dare.†*

That fear to live is virtue, you contend,  
This point, my father, you can ne'er defend ;  
That's virtue, which can evils great withstand,  
And not retreat, nor shift to either hand.

Or as this,

*Rebus in adversis facile est contemnere mortem,  
Fortiter ille facit, qui miser esse potest.‡*

The wretched well may wish for death, but he  
Is brave, who dares to live in misery.

It is cowardice, not valour, to squat, as it were, in a hole under a great tomb, to avoid the strokes of fate. Valour never breaks its way, nor goes out of its path, for the greatest storm that blows :

*Si fractus illabatur orbis  
Impavulum ferient ruinæ.§*

Though Jove's dread arm with thunders rend the spheres,  
Beneath the crush of worlds he nothing fears.

The avoiding of other inconveniences commonly pushes us upon this ; nay, sometimes the endea-

\* Hor. lib. iv. ode 4, ver. 57, &c.

† Senec. Thebais, act. i. sc. 1, ver. 190, &c.

‡ Mart. lib. xi. ep. 57, ver. 15, 16.

§ Hor. lib. iii. ode 3, ver. 7, 8.

your to fly from death makes us run into the mouth of it :

*Hic, rogo, non furor est, ne moriære, mori ?\**

Can there be greater madness, pray reply,  
Than that one should, for fear of dying, die ?

Like those who, for fear of a precipice, throw themselves headlong from it ;

— *Multos in summa pericula misit  
Venturi timor ipse mali : fortissimus ille est,  
Qui promptus metuenda pati, si cominus instent,  
Et differre potest.†*

*Usque adeo mortis formidine, vitæ  
Percipit humanos odium, lucisque videndæ,  
Ut sibi consciscant mœrenti pectore lethum,  
Obliti fontem curarum hunc esse timorem.‡*

The fear of future evils makes men run  
Into far worse than those they strive to shun :  
But he deserves the hero's character,  
Who boldly faces ills which others fear,  
And can divert them when they draw too near.  
To that degree does death some men affright,  
That, causing them to hate both life and light,  
They kill themselves in sorrow, not aware  
That their disgust arises from this fear.

Plato (*de Legibus*, lib. ix. p. 660) prescribes an ignominious sepulture for him who has deprived his nearest and dearest friend, viz. himself, of life, and his destined course of years, when neither compelled so to do by public trial, nor by any sad and unavoidable accident of fortune, nor by any insupportable disgrace, but by cowardice, and the weakness of a faint heart.

The opinion which makes so little of life is ridiculous ; for, in short, it is our very being, it is our all. Whatever things have a nobler and more valuable being may reproach ours, but it is against nature for us to despise and to make little account of ourselves: this is a disease peculiar to man, for we do not per-

\* Mart. lib. ii. cp. 80.

† Lucan. lib. vii. ver. 104, &c.

‡ Lucret. lib. iii. ver. 79, &c.

ceive that any other creature hates and despises itself: it is from a vanity of the like kind that we desire to be something else than what we are: the effect of such a desire does not concern us, forasmuch as it is frustrated. He who wishes that he were formed an angel, does nothing for himself, and would be never the better for it; for, being no more, who should rejoice, and be sensible of this amendment for him?

*Debet enim miserè cui fortè ægrèque futurum est,  
Ipse quoque esse in uno tum tempore, cum male possit  
Accidere.\**

For whosoe'er shall in misfortunes live,  
Must be when those misfortunes shall arrive.

Security, indolence, impossibility, a privation from the evils of this life, for the purchasing whereof we make an end of it, are of no manner of advantage to us: to no purpose does that man avoid war, who cannot enjoy peace; and to no purpose also does he avoid labour or pain, who has not wherewithal to relish tranquillity.

/ What are  
the justest  
reasons for  
suicide.

Among those of the opinion first mentioned, there has been a great doubt, what are the most justifiable motives for suicide, which they call εὐλογον ἐξαγωγὴν, i. e. "a reasonable exit."† For though they say, that man must often die for trivial causes, since those which detain us in life are of no great weight, yet there is to be some measure. There are some fantastic, senseless humours, that have prompted not only particular men, but even communities, to destroy themselves: of this I have heretofore given some examples; and we read, moreover, of the Milesian virgins, that, by a mad compact, they hanged themselves, one after another, till the magistrates made an order, that the bodies of all of them,

\* Lucret. lib. iii. ver. 874, &c.

† This was the expression used by the Stoics in that case. See Diog. Laert. in the Life of Zeno, lib. vii. sect. 130, and Menage's observations on this passage, p. 311, 312.

who should be found thus hanged hereafter,\* should be drawn, by the same halter, stark-naked through the city. When Threicion† advised Cleomenes to dispatch himself by reason of the ill state of his affairs; and as he had escaped the most honourable death in the battle which he had just lost, to choose this other, the second to it in honour, and not to give the conquerors an opportunity to make him suffer an ignominious death, or a shameful life: Cleomenes,‡ with a courage truly Lacedæmonian and Stoical, refused this advice, as cowardly and unmanly. "That," says he, "is a remedy which can never fail me, but which never ought to be made use of, whilst there is yet a spark of hope remaining: that to live was sometimes constancy and valour: that he was desirous, that even his death should be of service to his country; and that he intended it should be an act of honour and virtue." Threicion, still convinced, in his own mind, that he was right, actually killed himself:§ Cleomenes did the same afterwards, but not till he had tried fortune to the very last. All the inconveniences in the world are not considerable enough for a man to choose death for the sake of avoiding them.

Besides, there are so many sudden alterations in human affairs, that it is not easy to judge when we are truly at the end of our hopes:

What are  
to be the  
limits of  
our hopes.

*Sperat et in sævâ victus gladiator arenâ,  
Sic licet infesto pollice turba minax. ||*

The fencer, conquer'd in the lists, hopes on,  
Though the spectators point that he is gone.

The old proverb says, "While there's life there's hope." "Ay; but," replies Seneca,¶ "shall I

\* Plutarch of the worthy deeds of women.

† Or rather Therycion; for Plutarch, from whom this notable passage is taken, calls him *Θερύκιον*.

‡ Plutarch, in the Life of Agis and Cleomenes, cap. 14.

§ Idem, *ibid*.

|| Sulpitii Sev.

¶ Senec. ep. 70.



“ rather think that fortune can do all things for the  
 “ living man, than that fortune has no power over  
 “ him that knows how to die?” When Josephus\*  
 was in such apparent and imminent danger, a whole  
 nation, as it were, being risen against him, that he  
 had no visible resource left; yet being, as he himself  
 says, advised by one of his friends, in this extremity,  
 to dispatch himself, it was well for him that he still  
 persisted in hopes, since fortune, contrary to all  
 human expectation, diverted the accident, so that he  
 saw himself delivered from it without any manner  
 of inconvenience.

Deaths fatal by hav-  
 ing been  
 precipi-  
 tant,

On the contrary, Cassius and Brutus completely  
 ruined the remains of the Roman liberty, of which  
 they were the protectors, by that precipitation and  
 temerity with which they killed themselves before  
 the proper time and occasion. At the battle of  
 Serisolles in 1544, M. d'Anguien attempted twice to  
 cut his throat with his sword,† despairing of the  
 fortune of the day, which, indeed, went untowardly  
 in the part of the field where he was posted, and by  
 such precipitancy had like to have deprived himself  
 of the glory of so noble a victory. I have seen a  
 hundred hares escape under the very mouths of the  
 greyhounds. There was a man who outlived his ex-  
 ecutioner :‡

*Multa dies variusque labor mutabilis ævi  
 Retulit in melius: multos alterna revisens  
 Lusit, et in sulido rursûs fortuna locavit. §*

Much time and various labour oft translate  
 Life's changing scenes into a better state;  
 Inconstant fortune places those in joy.

To whom, ere now, she always has been coy.

What  
 causes may  
 induce a  
 man to kill  
 himself.

Pliny says, there are but three sorts of diseases,  
 for avoiding of which a man has a right to destroy  
 himself. The severest of all is the stone in the

\* Josephus's Jewish Antiquities, p. 537.

† Montluc's Comment.

‡ Senec. ep. 13.

§ Æneid. lib. xi. ver. 425, &c.

bladder, when there is a retention of the urine.\* Seneca says, those diseases only, which, for a long time disturb the functions of the soul; and some there have been, who, to avoid a worse death, have chose one of their own liking. Democritus, general of the Ætolians, being carried prisoner to Rome, found means to escape in the night; but, being close pursued by his keepers, rather than be retaken, he ran himself through the body with his own sword.† Antinous and Theodorus, when their city of Epirus (Passaro) was reduced by the Romans to the last extremity,‡ advised the people to kill themselves all to a man; but, the advice to surrender themselves being preferred, they went to seek death by rushing upon the enemy with an intention to strike home, and not to ward off a blow.§

Some years ago, when the island of Gozo|| was taken by the Turks, a Sicilian, who had two beautiful daughters ripe for marriage, killed them first, and then the mother, as she was running in to save them: this done he sallied into the street with a cross bow and a hand gun, with which, at two shots, he killed two of the foremost Turks advancing to his door, and then, with sword in hand, charged furiously amongst the rest, when he was, on a sudden, surrounded and cut to pieces; by which action he saved both himself and his family from slavery. The Jewish women, after the circumcision of their children, flung themselves, with them, down a pre-

Death preferred to slavery.

\* In the quarto edition of these Essays, in 1588, Pliny is said to mention two more, viz. a pain in the stomach, and the head-ach, which, he says, lib. xxv. cap. 3, were the only three distempers, almost, for which men killed themselves: as to their right of killing themselves, he does not mention a word of it here; and I cannot conceive, why Montaigne, who, at first, entered thoroughly into Pliny's sense, by saying that, according to this author, it was the custom for men to kill themselves, in order to be rid of any one of these three distempers, made him say afterwards, that they had a right to kill themselves for this very end.

† Tit. Liv. lib. xxxvii. cap. 46.

‡ Idem, lib. xiv. cap. 46.

§ Idem, *ibid.*

|| A small island to the west of Malta, and not far from it.

tipice to escape the cruelty of Antiochus. I have been told, that a prisoner of quality being in one of our jails, his relations knowing that he would surely be condemned, in order to prevent the ignominy of it, they suborned a priest to tell him, that the sovereign remedy for his deliverance was to recommend himself to such a saint, with such and such vows, and that he should fast eight days together, without taking any sort of nourishment, however weak and faint it made him. He placed his faith in the remedy, and by this means destroyed himself before he was aware, not dreaming of death, or of any danger.

Scribonia's  
advice to  
her nephew  
to kill him-  
self.

Scribonia\* advising Libo, her nephew, to kill himself, rather than wait for the stroke of justice, persuaded him to it by saying, that it was really doing another person's business to save his life to put it into the hands of those who would come to demand it three or four days after,† and that it was serving his enemies to keep his blood for the fees of such hounds.

The cou-  
rageous  
death of  
old Rasias.

We read, in the Bible, that Nicanor, the persecutor of God's law, having sent his guards to seize upon old Rasias, who, for his virtue, was surnamed the father of the Jews,‡ the good man, seeing no quarter was to be expected, and finding his gate burnt down, and his enemies ready to seize him, and choosing to die like a gentleman, rather than fall into the hands of his wicked adversaries, and suffer himself to be cruelly butchered, to the dishonour of his rank and quality, stabbed himself with his own sword; but, doing it in such haste that he did not give a home thrust, he ran and threw himself from the top of a wall among his enemies, who made way for him, so that he pitched directly upon his head: and, notwithstanding this, perceiving he had still some remains of life, he renewed his courage, and,

\* The third wife of Augustus Caesar.

† Senec. ep. 70.

‡ Maccab. lib. ii. chap. 14, ver. 37—46.

starting upon his feet, all bloody and wounded as he was, forced his way, through the crowd, to a sharp steep rock, where, for his last effort, he drew his bowels out through one of his wounds, which, tearing and pulling them to pieces with both his hands, he threw amongst his pursuers, appealing to and invoking the divine vengeance to fall upon their heads.

Of all violences done to the conscience, that done to the chastity of women is, in my opinion, the most difficult to escape, forasmuch as there is a natural mixture of corporeal pleasure in it; and for this cause the dissent from it cannot be perfect enough, and in the party forced there seems to be some mixture of the will. The ecclesiastical history makes reverent mention of many instances of devout women, who have embraced death to be secure from the outrages ready to be committed by tyrants against their religion and conscience. Pelagia and Sophronia were both canonised, the first of whom threw herself, with her mother and sisters, into a river, to avoid being forced by some soldiers; and the last also killed herself, to avoid being ravished by Maxentius the emperor.

Acts of violence committed on the chastity of women.

It may, perhaps, be reckoned an honour to us, in future ages, that a learned author of the present, and particularly a Parisian, would fain persuade the ladies of our time to take any other course, rather than once to entertain the horrid thought of such a desperate action. I am sorry he had never heard (that he might have mixed it with his other tales) the remarkable saying of a woman, which was told me at Tholouse, who had passed through the handling of some soldiers: "God be praised," said she, "that once, at least, in my life, I have had my swill without sin." Indeed, our French ladies are too good-natured to be guilty of such cruelty to themselves; and, God be thanked, our air is thoroughly purged of it since this good advice: according to

A certain author dissuades the ladies from putting themselves to death for fear of a ravishment.

the rule of honest Marot,\* it is enough that they say "no," when they do it.

Death preferred to a miserable life.

History abounds with instances of persons that have, in a thousand forms, exchanged a melancholy life for death. Lucius Aruntius† killed himself for the sake, as he said, of flying from deeds past and to come. Granus Silvanus, and Statius Proximus, after being pardoned by Nero,‡ killed themselves, either because they could not bear to think they owed their lives to the pardon of so wicked a man, or that they might not be troubled another time to solicit a second pardon, considering how apt he was to entertain suspicions, and receive accusations against men of probity. Spargapizes, the son of queen Tomyris, being taken prisoner of war by Cyrus,§ made use of the first favour which Cyrus granted him to be unbound, in killing himself, having proposed no other benefit from his liberty than to be revenged on himself for the disgrace of being taken. Bogeze, governor in Ionia for king Xerxes, being besieged by the Athenian army,|| under the command of Cimon, refused the offer made him, that, if he would capitulate, he should return in safety, with all his wealth, to Asia; not having patience to survive the loss of a place which his master had given him to keep: therefore, after having defended his city to the last extremity, so that there was no food left to eat, he first threw all his gold into the river Strymon, together with every thing else, of which he thought the enemy would make a good prize; and having ordered a great pile of wood to be set on fire, and the throats of all the women, children, con-

\* In an epigram, entitled, *Yea and Nay*, which begins, "Un doux Nenny avec un doux Sourire:" i. e. "One soft nay, nay, with a simpering smile."

† Having spoke thus, like a prophet, he cut his veins. Tacit. Annal. lib. vi.

‡ Tacit. Annal. lib. xiv.

§ Herodot. lib. i. p. 98.

|| Idem. lib. vii. p. 475.

cubines, and servants to be cut, he cast their bodies into the flames, and then leaped in himself.

Ninachetuen, an Indian nobleman, having the first intelligence of the Portuguese viceroy's determination to turn him out of an office which he had in Malacca, without any apparent cause, and to give it to the king of Campar, formed this resolution in his own mind: he caused a scaffold to be erected on pillars, which was not so broad as long, and royally adorned with tapestry, and abundance of flowers and perfumes; and then having put on a robe of cloth of gold, enriched with a great number of costly jewels, he went out into the street, and mounted, by steps, to the scaffold, in one corner of which there was a pile of aromatic wood lighted. The people flocking to see to what end these unusual preparations were made, Ninachetuen, with a countenance full of boldness and indignation, remonstrated how much the Portuguese nation had been obliged to him; with what fidelity he had behaved in his office; that having so often, sword in hand, testified, in behalf of another, that honour was much dearer to him than life, he would not abandon his concern for it in his own cause; that fortune having denied him all the means of opposing the injury intended to be done to him, he had courage to free himself, at least, from the feeling of it, and not serve as a jest to the populace, nor for a triumph to men of less worth than himself; which having said, he leaped into the fire.

Sextilia,\* the wife of Scaurus, and Paxea, the wife of Labeo, in order to encourage their husbands to avoid the dangers that pressed upon them, where in they had no share but for the sake of conjugal affection, voluntarily engaged their own lives, to serve them for an example and company in this extreme necessity. What they did for their husbands, Cocceius Nerva did for his country, with equal affection.

Two women who put themselves to death, to encourage their husbands to do the same.

\* Tacit. Annal. lib. vi.

though not so much to advantage. This great lawyer, flourishing in health, wealth, reputation, and credit with the emperor,\* had no other motive to kill himself, but mere compassion of the miserable state of the Roman republic.

The decent  
exit of Ful-  
vius's wife.

Nothing could be more decent than the death of the wife of Fulvius, who was a favourite of Augustus. The emperor having discovered that he had blabbed an important secret which he had committed to him, he frowned upon him the next morning that he came to attend him; upon which he returned home full of despair, and told his wife, with sorrow, what a misfortune he had fallen into, and that he was resolved to kill himself. To which she made answer, very frankly, "It is but reason you should, since you have, often enough, experienced the incontinency of my tongue, and could not take warning: but, hold, let me kill myself first;"† and, without any more dispute, she ran herself through the body with a sword.

The death  
of Vibius,  
and of  
twenty-se-  
ven sena-  
tors of Ca-  
pua.

Vibius Virius, finding that his city, besieged by the Romans, could hold out no longer, and that he had no mercy to hope for from the besiegers, determined, after many remonstrances on the subject, in the last assembly of their senate, that the noblest way to escape their fate was to do it by their own hands,‡ telling them, that the enemy would honour them for it, and Hannibal would be sensible what a number of faithful friends he had abandoned: he concluded with an invitation to those who were of his opinion, to go and partake of a good supper which he had ready at home, where, after they had eat heartily, they should drink together of a beverage he had prepared,§ a certain liquor which would free the body from torment, the mind from anguish, and the eyes and ears from seeing and hearing all the bitter and scandalous reproaches and injuries which

\* Tacit. Annal. lib. vi.

† Plutarch of Loquacity, ch. ix.

‡ Tit. Liv. lib. xxvi. cap. 13, 14, 15.

§ Idem. ibid. cap. 13.

the vanquished had to expect from the enraged and cruel conqueror. "I have," said he, "taken care that there shall be a funeral pile before my house, and that, as soon as we are expired, there shall be proper persons ready to cast our bodies into it." There were enough who approved of this noble resolution, but few who imitated it. Twenty-seven senators followed him, who, after having tried to drown this melancholy thought in wine, ended the feast with this mortal mess, and embracing one another, after having jointly bewailed the misfortune of their country, some returned to their own houses, others staid to be burned in the same flames with Vibius, in which they were all so long a dying (the vapour of the wine having filled all their veins, and retarding the effect of the poison), that some of them were almost within an hour of seeing the enemy enter Capua, which was taken the very next morning; and of suffering the miseries which they had paid so dearly for escaping.

Taurea Jubellius, another citizen of Capua,\* when Fulvius, the consul, returned from the shameful butchery he had made of two hundred and twenty-five senators, called him back undauntedly by his name, and having made him stop, "Give the word," said he, "that I also may be dispatched after the massacre of so many others, when thou mayest boast of having killed a much stouter man than thyself."†

Fulvius scorning him as a man out of his senses, and having, that very instant, received letters from Rome, disapproving the inhumanity of his execution,‡ which restrained his hands from shedding more blood; Jubellius then proceeded, saying, "My country, being now taken, my neighbours and friends lost, and as I have killed my wife and children with my own hand, to save them from

\* Or Campania. Titus Livius calls him Campanus, lib. xxvi. cap. 15.

† Idem, *ibid*.

‡ Idem, *ibid*.



“ suffering any indignities, but am denied the same  
 “ fate as my fellow-citizens, my fortitude shall be  
 “ revenged on this hateful life :” and drawing out a  
 dagger which he had concealed about him, he plunged  
 it into his own breast, and fell down dead at the con-  
 sul’s feet.

Indians  
 who burned  
 themselves  
 alive in  
 their city,  
 when be-  
 sieged by  
 Alexander  
 the Great.

The inhabitants of a city in the Indies, that was  
 besieged by Alexander, being very much pressed,  
 put on a vigorous resolution to deprive him of the  
 pleasure of this conquest, and burned themselves in  
 general, together with their town, in spite of his  
 humanity.\* A new kind of war this, where the  
 enemy strove to save them, and they to destroy  
 themselves, by doing every thing to make themselves  
 sure of death, which men do to secure life.

The preci-  
 pitant  
 death of the  
 inhabitants  
 of Astapa,  
 in Spain.

The inhabitants of Astapa, in Spain, finding their  
 walls, and other defence, too weak to hold out  
 against the Romans, made one heap of all their  
 wealth and furniture ; and having put all the women  
 and children upon it, and surrounded it with wood  
 and other combustibles fit to make a sudden blaze,  
 and left fifty of their young men to put their design  
 in execution, they made a sally, in which, according  
 to their wish, for want of the power to defeat the  
 besiegers, they caused themselves to be every man  
 slain : then the fifty young men, after having mas-  
 saced every living soul in the town, and set fire to  
 the heap, threw themselves into it, with their arms,†  
 thereby putting an end to their generous spirit of  
 liberty, rather in an insensible than in a sorrowful  
 and disgraceful condition ; and demonstrating to the  
 enemy, that, if fortune had so pleased, they had as  
 well the courage to have robbed them of the victory,  
 as they had to frustrate and render it dreadful, nay,  
 and mortal, to those,† who, allured by the splendor  
 of the melted gold running in the fire, hurried in  
 such numbers to catch it, that some were burned, and

\* Diod. of Sicil. lib. xvii. cap. 18.

† Tit. Liv. lib. xxviii. cap. 22, 23.

† Idem. ibid. cap. 23.

others suffocated, being pushed too near the flames by the throng of those behind them, who were equally greedy to snatch the shining ore.

The Abydeans, when pressed hard by king Philip, took the same resolution, but were so curbed that they could not execute it; for the king, who could not think of an act of such precipitancy with abhorrence (the treasure and furniture which they had condemned, partly to fire, and partly to water, being first seized),\* drawing his soldiers off, granted them three days to kill themselves with the more ease and decency. This time they filled with bloody murders, beyond all hostile cruelty, insomuch that there was scarce a single person left alive, who was able to dispose of himself as he pleased. There are infinite examples of the like popular conclusions, which seem to be the more cruel by how much the effect of them is the more universal, and yet, in reality, are less cruel than such as are particular. The judgments of private persons are so captivated by the charms of society, that reason will have that weight with all in general, which it would not have with individuals.

The rash death of the Abydeans.

The condemned persons in the reign of Tiberius, who kept themselves alive till they suffered death by the hands of the executioner, forfeited their estates, and were deprived of burial; they who saved the executioner a labour by executing themselves,† were interred, and might make a will. But death is also desired, sometimes, for the hopes of a greater good. { “I desire,” said St. Paul, “to depart, and to be with Christ:”‡ and “Who shall loose me from these bands?” Cleombrotus Ambraciota, having read Plato’s Phædon, thirsted so much after the life to come, that, for no other cause, he threw himself into the sea.§ From hence it appears, with what

Death desired for the hopes of a greater good.

\* Tit. Liv. lib. xxxi. cap. 17, 18.

† Tacit. Annal. lib. vi.

‡ Phil. ch. i. ver. 23.

§ Cic. Tusc. Quæst. lib. i. cap. 34.

clearly, a private - in general -

impropriety we affix the term despair to that voluntary dissolution of ourselves, to which the eagerness of hope often excites us, and as often a sedate and settled inclination of the judgment.

The voluntary death of James Chastel, bishop of Soissons.

James Chastel, bishop of Soissons, in St. Lewis's expedition beyond the seas, seeing the king and the whole army on the point of returning to France, he left the affairs of religion imperfect, took a resolution rather to go to paradise; and, having bid adieu to his friends, he rushed alone, in the sight of every one, upon the enemy's army, and was presently cut to pieces. In a certain kingdom of the new-discovered world, upon a day of solemn procession, when the idol they adore is drawn about in public on a chariot of surprising grandeur, several are then seen cutting off slices of their flesh to offer to it; besides a number of others who prostrate themselves as it goes along, causing their bodies to be broke and ground to pieces under the massy wheels, in order, by their death, to obtain the veneration of sanctity, which is accordingly paid them.<sup>4</sup> This death of the said bishop, with his sword in his hand, has more ~~bravery~~ in it, and less sensation, the heat of the battle stifling the latter in some measure.

Poison kept and prepared at the public expense, for such as were inclined to make use of it.

There are certain governments which have taken upon them to regulate the justice and proper time of voluntary deaths. A poison prepared from hemlock, at the expense of the public, was kept, in times past, in our city of Marseilles,\* for all who had a mind to hasten their latter end, after they had produced the reasons for their design to the six hundred who composed their senate: nor was it lawful for any person to lay hands upon himself, otherwise than by leave of the magistracy, and upon just occasions.

Courageous death of a woman who

This was a law also in other places. As Sextus Pompeius was going to Asia, he touched at Cea, an island of Negropont; and, whilst he was there, it

\* Valerius Maximus, lib. ii. cap. 6, de externis institutis, sect. 7.

accidentally happened (as we have it from one who <sup>poisoned herself in public.</sup> was with him),\* that a lady of great authority, having given an account to her countrymen why she was resolved to put an end to her life, desired Pompeius to be present at her death, to render it the more honourable, which he was; and having a long time tried, to no purpose, all the force of eloquence (of which he was master in a wonderful degree) to dissuade her from her purpose, he, at length, suffered her to take her own course. She was above ninety years of age, in a very happy state both of body and mind; but was, at that time, laid down upon her bed better dressed than usual, and leaning on her elbow. "The gods," said she, "O Sextus Pompeius, and rather those I leave, than those I go to seek, take it well at thy hands, that thou hast not disdained to be both the counsellor of life to me, and the witness of my death. For my own part, as I have always had the experience of the smiles of fortune, for fear lest the desire of living too long may make her frown upon me, I am going, by a happy period, to dismiss the remains of my soul, leaving behind me two daughters of my body, and a legion of grand-children." Having said this, and given some exhortations to her family to live in peace and union, divided her estate amongst them, and recommended her eldest daughter to the protection of the domestic gods; she boldly took the cup in her hand, in which was the poison, and having made her vows to Mercury, accompanied with prayers that he would conduct her to some happy seat in the other world, she drank off the mortal beverage. She then entertained the company with the progress of its operation; and as the parts of her body were seized with a chillness, one after another, she told them, at length, it had reached her heart and bowels; and then called her daughters to do the last office for her, and to close her eyes.

\* Valerius Maximus himself, from whom the whole narrative is taken.

The voluntary death of the Hyperboreans.

Pliny tells us of a certain Hyperborean country, where, by reason of the mild temperature of the air, the inhabitants rarely end their lives but by the voluntary surrender of them; inasmuch, that, when they are weary and surfeited with life, it is usual for them, after they have lived to a good old age, to make a sumptuous feast, and then to throw themselves into the sea, from a certain rock destined to that service. Pain, and the fear of a worse death, seem to me to be the most excusable inducements.\*

## CHAPTER LXI.

### *To-morrow is a New Day.*

An eulogium on the language of Amyot, the translator of Plutarch.

OF all our French writers, James Amyot, in my opinion, deserves the palm,† not only for the propriety and purity of his language, in which he surpasses all others; nor for his constant perseverance in so long a labour; nor for the depth of his knowledge, having so happily unravelled the intricacies of so difficult an author (for people may say what they please, though I understand nothing of Greek, yet I perceive a sense so well connected and maintained throughout his whole translation, that surely he must have perfectly known the author's true thoughts, or, by being long conversant with him, must have had a general idea of Plutarch's mind strongly imprinted in his soul, forasmuch as he has delivered us nothing from him that in the least derogates from or contradicts him); but, above all, I am pleased with him for having singled out a book so proper, so

\* Plin. Nat. Hist. lib. iv. cap. 12.

† To this, I think, should be added, that Amyot, by his translation of Plutarch, has not only polished, but even enriched, our language.

worthy for a present to his country. We dunces had been sunk in the mire, had not this book lifted us out of it. By this favour of his we venture now both to speak and write. The very ladies read it to the school-masters. It is our breviary. If this good man be yet living, I would recommend him to do as much by Xenophon. It is a more easy task than the other, and, therefore, more proper for a gentleman so far advanced in years. And then I know not how it is, but methinks, though he very briskly and clearly recovers himself when he has made a trip, yet his style is more his own, when it is not embarrassed, and runs smoothly on.

I was just now reading that passage in Plutarch,\* Curiosity greedy after news. where he says of himself, that Rusticus, while present at a declamation of his at Rome, received a packet from the emperor, but delayed to open it till all was ended; for which, said he, the whole audience highly applauded this person's gravity. It is true, that as I am on the subject of curiosity, and that eager and ravenous appetite for news, which makes us, with so much indiscretion and impatience, abandon every thing to entertain a novelty, and, without any manner of respect or civility, break open, in what company soever, all letters that are brought to us, he had reason to applaud the gravity of Rusticus upon this occasion, and might, likewise, have commended his civility and courtesy in not interrupting the course of his declamation. But I doubt whether his prudence deserves to be praised; for, as the letters came to him unexpected, and especially from an emperor, it might have fallen out that the deferring to read them would have been very prejudicial. The vice opposite to curiosity is Negligence the opposite vice to curiosity. negligence, or indifference, to which I certainly have a natural propensity by my constitution, and to which I have seen some men so extremely addicted, that they have kept letters in their pockets, un-

\* In the treatise of Curiosity, ch. 14, Amyot's translation.

opened, for three or four days together. I never open any letters, neither those committed to my care, nor those which pass through my hands by accident; and I am uneasy with myself, if my eyes inadvertently catch any contents of letters of importance that a great man is reading when I am close by him. Never was a man less inquisitive, or less prying into other people's affairs.

The reading of letters ought not to be deferred.

In our father's days, M. de Boutieres, had like to have lost Turin, because, being in good company at supper, he deferred to read an advertisement which was sent him of the treason that was plotted against the said city, of which he was governor. And this very Plutarch\* has given us to understand, that Julius Cæsar had saved himself, if he had read a paper that was presented to him as he went to the senate, on that very day he was killed by the conspirators. He also tells the story of Archias, the tyrant of Thebes, that, the night before Pelopidas put his plot into execution for killing him in order to restore his country's liberty, he had a circumstantial account of the whole conspiracy sent him in writing by another Archias, an Athenian, and that the packet having been delivered to him while he sat at supper,† he deferred the opening of it, saying, what afterwards turned to a proverb in Greece, "To-morrow is a new day." A wise man may, in my opinion, for the sake of another person, either for fear, like Rusticus, of indecently disturbing the company, or of breaking off another affair of importance, put off the reading or hearing any new thing that is brought to him; but if a man, for his own particular interest or pleasure, even though he holds a public office, will not interrupt his dinner, nor be awaked out of his nap, he is inexcusable.

The consular place at table the

And there was anciently, at Rome, the consular place, which they called the most honourable, at

\* In the Life of Julius Cæsar, cap. 17.

† In his treatise of Socrates's Dæmon, ch. 27.

table, for being a seat which had most scope, and was of the easiest access to those who came to speak with him who was placed in it; which is a proof that though they were at table they did not abandon the concern for other affairs and incidents. But, when all is said that can be said, it is very difficult, in human actions, to prescribe so just a rule, by rational arguments, that fortune will not maintain her right in them.

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## CHAPTER LXII.

### *Of Conscience.*

AS I was travelling one day, during the civil wars, with my brother the Sieur de la Brousse, we met a gentleman of good fashion, who was of the contrary party to us, though I knew nothing of it, for he pretended to be of ours: and the mischief of it is, that, in wars of this sort, the cards are so shuffled, your enemy not being distinguished from yourself, by any apparent mark, either of language, or carriage, being bred up under the same laws, air, and manners, that it is difficult to avoid disorder and confusion. This made me afraid myself of meeting with any of our troops in the place where I was not known, that I might not be forced to tell my name, and for fear of something worse, perhaps, as happened to me once, when, by such a mistake, I lost both men and horses; and, amongst others, an Italian, my page, whom I had bred up with care, was miserably killed; a fine lad, and one that was very promising. But the gentleman we met had so strong a terror upon him, and was so mortified at the meeting with any horsemen, and travelling through towns which held out for the king, that I, at length, guessed he was alarmed by his conscience.



The poor man seemed to be in such a condition, that through his vizor and the crosses on his cassock, one might have penetrated into his bosom, and read his secret intentions. So wonderful is the force of conscience, that it makes us betray, accuse, and fight with ourselves ; and, for want of other evidence, to give testimony against ourselves :

*Occultum quatiante animo tortore flagellum.\**

Tormenting conscience shakes the soul within.

Strange  
discovery  
of a parri-  
cide.

The tale that follows is in the mouths of children : Bessus, a Pæonian, being reproached with having wantonly pulled down a sparrow's nest,† and killed the young ones, said he had reason for it, because those little birds were continually chattering a falsehood, that he had murdered his father. This parricide had, till then, been undiscovered and unknown, but the revengeful furies of his conscience caused it to be discovered by himself, who was justly to suffer for it.

Punish-  
ment con-  
sists with  
sin.

Hesiod corrects † Plato's assertion that " Punishment follows close at the heels of sin ;" for he says, it is born at the same instant with sin. Who-soever expects punishment, already suffers it ; and whosoever has deserved it, expects it.‡ Wickedness contrives tortures for itself :

*Malum consilium consultori pessimum : ||*

He that gives bad counsel suffers most by it.

As the wasp stings and hurts another, but most of all itself : for it thereby loses its sting and its strength for ever :

—— *Vitæque in vulnere ponunt : ¶*

And in the wound which they inflict, expire.

\* Juv. sat. xiii. ver. 195.

† See Plutarch's treatise, Why the divine justice sometimes defers the punishment of crimes, ch. 8.

‡ This reflection is taken from the same treatise, ch. 9.

§ Senec. epist. 105.

|| Aul. Gell. lib. iv. cap. 5.

¶ Virg. Georg. lib. iv. ver. 298.

The Spanish fly,\* or cantharides, has in itself some particle which, by the contrariety of its nature, serves as an antidote to its own poison. In like manner, at the same instant that a man feels a pleasure in vice, there is a sting at the tail of it in the conscience, which tortures us sleeping and waking with many racking thoughts :

*Quippe ubi se multi per somnia sæpe loquentes,  
Aut morbo delirantes, procreasse ferantur,  
Et celata diu in medium peccata dedisse.†*

The guilty seldom their own counsel keep,  
But oft will blab it ev'n in their sleep ;  
Or, in a fever raving, will reveal  
Crimes which they long had labour'd to conceal.

Apollodorus dreamed that he saw himself flayed by the Scythians, and then boiled in a caldron ; and that his heart muttered these words : “ I am the cause of all these evils.”† Epicurus said, “ No lurking-hole could hide the wicked, because they could not assure themselves of being concealed, whilst their consciences discovered them to themselves.”

————— *Prima est hæc ultio, quod se  
Judice, nemo nocens absolvitur.‡*

————— ‘Tis the first, constant punishment of sin,  
That no bad man absolves himself within.

As an evil conscience possesses us with fear, a good one gives us assurance and confidence. And I can truly say, I have faced several dangers with the more boldness, in consideration of the secret knowledge I had of my own will, and of the innocence of my intentions :

The confidence resulting from a good conscience.

\* Montaigne asserts this more positively than Plutarch, the author from whom he took it, ch. 9, of Plutarch's treatise above-mentioned.

† Lucret. lib. v. ver. 1157, &c.

‡ This is also taken from Plutarch's before-mentioned treatise of the delay of the divine justice, ch. 9. This Apollodorus, who reigned like a true tyrant, was king of Cassandria, in Macedonia.

§ Juv. sat. xiii. ver. 2, 3.

*Conscia mens ut cuique sua est, ita concipit intra  
Pectora pro facto, spemque metumque sua.\**

Despotic conscience rules our hopes and fears.

The confident  
innocency of  
Scipio.

Of this there are a thousand examples, of which it may suffice to produce three of one and the same person. Scipio, having a heavy accusation laid against him one day before the people of Rome, instead of excusing himself, or soothing his judges, "It will well become you," said he to them, "to sit in judgment upon the man from whom you derive the power you have to judge all the world."† And, another time, all the answers he gave to some impeachments brought against him by a tribune of the people, instead of pleading his cause: "Let us go," said he, "my fellow-citizens, and give thanks to the gods for the victory which they granted me over the Carthaginians, as on this day."‡ And, advancing first towards the temple himself, the whole assembly, not excepting his accuser, followed in his train. And, Petilius§ having been instigated by Cato to demand an account of the money which had passed through his hands in the province of Antioch, Scipio, who came to the senate for this purpose, produced a book from under his robe, wherein, he told them, was an exact account of his receipts and disbursements; but being required to deliver it to the register, he refused it, saying, he would not so far disgrace himself; and tore the book to pieces with his own hands in the presence of the senate. I cannot suppose that the most seared conscience could have counterfeited such an assurance. "He had naturally too high a spirit," says Livy,|| "and was accustomed to too great fortune to know how to be criminal, and

\* Ovid. Fast. lib. i. ver. 25, 26.

† Plutarch, in his treatise, entitled, How far a man is allowed to praise himself, &c. ch. 5.

‡ Valer. Maxim. lib. iii. cap. 7, in Romanis.

§ Tit. Liv. lib. xxxviii. cap. 54, 55. || Lib. xxxviii. cap. 52.

“ to descend to the meanness of defending his own innocence.”

The rack is a pernicious invention, and seems to be rather a proof of a man's patience than of truth; which indeed is concealed both by him who can bear it, and by him who cannot. For why should pain sooner make me confess what is the real truth, than force me to say what is not? And, on the contrary, if he who is not guilty of that whereof he is accused, has the patience to undergo those torments, why should not he who is guilty have as much, when so fair a reward as his life is set before him? I imagine that this invention owes its rise to the consideration of the power of conscience, which seems to be assisting to the rack to make the guilty person confess his fault, and to weaken his resolution; while, on the other hand, it fortifies the innocent against the torture. To say the truth, it is a remedy full of uncertainty and danger. What will not a man say, what will he not do, rather than suffer such a painful torture?

The inconveniences of the rack.

*Etiam innocentes cogit mentiri dolor.\**

Pain compels even the innocent to lie.

From hence it comes to pass, that he whom the judge has put to the rack, with a view that he may not die innocent, makes him die both innocent and racked. Thousands have burdened their consciences by it with false confessions; in the number of whom I place Philotas,† considering the circumstances of the process that Alexander commenced against him, and the progress of his torture. But so it is (say they), that it is the least evil human weakness could have invented; yet, in my opinion, the invention was very inhuman, and to very little purpose.

Several nations, not so barbarous in this respect as the Greeks and Romans, by whom they were called

The use of the rack condemned

\* Ex Mimis Publianis.

† Q. Curtius, lib. vi. cap. 7, to the end of the book.

by several  
nations,  
and why.

Barbarians, think it horrible and cruel to torment and pull a man to pieces for a fault of which you are as yet in doubt. Is he to blame for your ignorance? Are not you unjust, that, because you would not kill him without a cause, you do worse than kill him? And, that this is the case, do but observe how often men choose to die without reason, rather than pass through this inquisition more painful than execution, and so acute that it often dispatches them before it. I know not where I had this story,\* but it is an exact representation of the conscience of our justice: a country woman accused a soldier to the general† of the army (who was a grand justiciary, and therefore determined all civil and criminal causes in his precinct) of having taken from her children the little boiled meat she had left to keep them from starving, the army having pillaged every thing they could find. There was no proof of this fact; therefore, the general cautioned the woman to take good heed of what she said,‡ forasmuch as she would incur the guilt of her own accusation, if she was found in a lie; but she persisting in her charge, he caused the soldier's belly to be ripped open, in order to be sure of the truth of the fact; and it appeared that the woman was in the right.§ An instructive sentence this!

\* The story is in Froissart, and there, no doubt, Montaigne had read it; though, when he wrote this chapter, he seems to have forgot his authority for it.

† Bajazet I. whom Froissart calls Amerehaquin. I was lately given to understand, by the ingenious commentator on Rabelais, tom. v. p. 217, that Bajazet was so called, because he was the son of Amurath; which I observe for the sake of those who might be as ignorant of this particular as I was, before I happened to cast my eye upon the page where it is mentioned, in Bordesius's Rabelais, printed at Amsterdam in 1711.

‡ The whole story is at large, and well attested, in Froissart's History, vol. iv. cap. 87.

§ If she had been convicted of a false accusation, the general would have been in the same case as the judge who caused a man to be hanged, after the rack had extorted a confession from him of a crime, of which it appeared afterwards he was altogether innocent.

## CHAPTER LXIII.

*Habit makes Things familiar to us.*

IT is hardly to be expected that reason and instruction should be powerful enough to lead us on to action, if we do not exercise and form our minds by experience to the course which we are desirous they should take; or else, when the effects are in their power, they will undoubtedly be embarrassed. This is the reason why those of the philosophers, who have aimed at the attainment of any superior excellency, did not indulge themselves in ease and security, and indolently wait for the cruelties of fortune to attack them in the state of unexperienced and raw soldiers, undisciplined for the battle, they sallied out to meet her, and put themselves purposely upon the proof of hardships. Some abandoned their riches, to exercise themselves in a voluntary poverty; others sought for labour, and the austerity of a painful life, to inure themselves to misfortune and hard work; others deprived themselves of the most precious parts of their bodies, as their eyes and privy members, for fear lest their too delightful and too effeminate service should relax and unhinge the stability and vigour of their minds.

But in dying, which is the greatest work we have to do, practice can be of no service to us. A man may, by custom and experience, fortify himself against pain, shame, poverty, and the like accidents; but as to death, we can make trial of it but once, and are all to learn what it is when it comes.

There were men, in ancient days, such excellent husbands of their time, that they tried, in death itself, to taste and relish it; and bent their minds to the utmost stretch, to discern what sort of a passage it is; but they have not yet returned to let us know

it. *Nulla retro via*: i. e. "There is no way back again:"

— *Nemo expergitus extat,  
Frigida quem semel est vitæ pausa sequuta.\**  
No person e'er again awak'd to breath,  
Who once was clasp'd in the cold arms of death.

A memorable instance of a Roman, who, when dying, observed the effect of death.

Canius Julius, a noble Roman, of singular virtue and constancy, having been condemned to die by that wicked monster Caligula, besides many other wonderful proofs which he gave of his resolution, as he was just going to be dispatched by the executioner, a philosopher, who was his friend, asked him: "Well, Canius, what are your thoughts now? Or how is your mind employed?" "I was posing," said he, "to observe, in the swift moment of death, whether I could perceive the departure of the soul." And he promised that, if he made any discovery, he would go the rounds amongst his friends, and show them what was the state of the soul.† This man philosophised not only unto death, but in death itself. What assurance was it, and what a bold spirit, to desire that death should be a lesson to him, and to be at leisure to think of any thing else in so great an affair!

*Jus hoc animi morientis habebat.†*

This mast'ry of his mind he, dying, had.

How a man may, in some measure, make death familiar to him.

And yet, I fancy, there is a certain way of making death familiar to us, and of trying, in some measure, what it is. We may have some experience of it, if not such as is entire and perfect, yet, at least, such as will not be quite useless to us, but may render us more firm and fearless. If we cannot come close to it, we may approach it, and reconnoitre it; and, if we cannot advance so far as to its castle, we may at least discover it, and be thoroughly acquainted with

\* Lucret. lib. iii. ver. 942, &c.

† Seneca de Tranquillitate Animi, cap. 14.

‡ Lucan. lib. viii. ver. 636.

its avenues. It is not without reason that we are taught to consider our very sleep as the image of death. <sup>Sleep the image of death.</sup> How easily do we pass from waking to sleeping? With how little concern do we part with the knowledge of light, and of ourselves? Peradventure, the faculty of sleeping would seem useless and contrary to nature, as it deprives us of all action and sense, were it not that nature instructs us by it, that she has made us equally both for life and death; and, from life, presents us to that everlasting state which she has reserved for us after this, to accustom us to it, and to remove our fear of it. But such as, by some violent accident, have fallen into a swoon, and therein lost all sense, they, in my opinion, have been very near seeing the true and natural face of death. For, as to the moment of the passage, it is not to be feared that it brings with it any labour or displeasure, forasmuch as we can have no feeling without leisure. Our sufferings require time, which is so short and precipitated in death, that it must necessarily be insensible. It is the approaches to it that we are to fear, and those may possibly fall within the limits of experience: many things seem greater to us in imagination, than they are in reality. I have spent a great part of my life in full and perfect health, such health too as was attended with a sprightly temper and a warm constitution. A state of such vigour and jollity gave me such a horrible idea of maladies, that, when I came to experience them, I found their attacks faint and easy, in comparison of what I apprehended; and of this I have experience every day. If I am sheltered from the weather in a dry warm room in a stormy and tempestuous night, I wonder, and am afflicted to think, how they that are then in the field can bear it; and, if I am there myself, I do not wish to be any where else. This thing alone of being always shut up in a room I thought was insupportable, but I was presently inured to it by being confined to it a week, nay, a month together, in a very melancholy,



disordered, and weak condition : and I have found, that, in the time of my health, I lamented the case of the sick much more than I think I need to be lamented when I am so myself ; and that, by the strength of my apprehension, the thing was magnified near one half more than it was in reality and truth. I hope the case will be the same with me at my death, and that I shall find the making such preparation, and calling in so much assistance for enabling me to undergo the stroke of it, were a needless trouble. But we cannot give ourselves too much advantage, at all adventures.

The story of an accident that happened to Moutaigne, which cast him into a long swoon.

In the time of our third or second commotions (I do not well remember which), going one day abroad, about a league from my house, which is situate in the centre of all the disturbance by the civil wars of France, thinking myself perfectly safe, and so near to the place of my retreat, that I had no occasion for any better equipage, I took a pad that was a very easy pacer, but not a strong one. On my return home, a sudden occasion fell out for my making use of this horse in a service which he was not much used to ; for one of my men, a tall lusty fellow, mounted upon a strong war-horse that was resty, and withal vigorous and sound, having a mind to act the bravo, and to out-ride his companion, came full speed into the very track where I was, and fell, like a colossus, upon the little man and his little horse, rushing, like thunder, with such a career of strength and weight, that he turned us both over and over, so that there lay the horse overthrown and stunned with the fall, and I ten or twelve yards beyond him, stretched out at my length on my back, with my face all battered and bruised, my sword, which I had in my hand, above ten yards before me, my belt broke to pieces, and myself with no more motion nor sense in me than a log. This was the only swoon I ever was in to this very hour. They who were about me, after having tried all the means they could make use of to bring me to myself, con-

cluded me dead, took me up in their arms, and had much ado to carry me to my house, which was at the distance of about half a French league. But, before I got home, and after having been given over for a dead man, above two full hours, I began to move, and to fetch my breath; for such a quantity of blood had overcharged my stomach, that nature was under a necessity of rousing her utmost strength to throw it off. They then raised me upon my feet, when I voided a bason full of clots of pure blood, as I did several times upon the road; by so doing I began to recover a little life, but it was very leisurely, and by such small degrees, that my first sentiments approached much nearer to death than life:

*Perche dubbiosa anchor del suo ritorno,  
Non s' assecura attonita la mente.\**

Because the soul her mansion half had quit,  
And was not sure she should return to it.

The remembrance of this accident, which is deeply imprinted in my soul, representing to me, in so great a degree of perfection, the image and idea of death, reconciles me, in some sort, to it. When I first began to open my eyes after my trance, my sight was so disturbed, so weak and glimmering, that I could then but just discern there was light:

— *Come quel ch'or apre, or chiude,  
Gil occhi mezzo fra'l sonno e l'esser desto.†*

So people in the morning, ere they rise,  
'Tween sleep and wake, oft twinkle with their eyes.

As to the functions of the soul, they advanced in the same pace as those of the body. I saw myself all bloody, my doublet being spotted all over with the blood which I had voided. The first thought which occurred to me was, that I had some shot in my hand; and true it is, that, at the same time,

\* Tasso's Jerusalem liberata, canto xii. stanza 74.

† Idem, canto viii. stanza 26.

several pieces were discharged round about us. Death seemed to me to be hovering on my lips. I shut my eyes, to help, as I thought, to push it off, and took a pleasure in languishing, and letting myself go. This was an imagination that only floated, as it were, on the surface of my mind, which was as tender and as weak as all the rest, though indeed not only exempt from uneasiness, but partaking of that pleasure, which those feel who sweetly drop into a slumber.

Whether swoonings in the agonies of death are very painful.

It is my opinion, this is the very state which those people are in, whom we see fainting away in the agonies of death; and that we lament them without cause, imagining that they are afflicted with grievous pains, or that their minds are oppressed with painful thoughts. It was always my notion, contrary to the opinion of many, and even of Stephen de la Boetius, that those whom we see confounded and stupified at the approaches of their latter end, or quite depressed with the length of their disease, or by a fit of an apoplexy, or the falling sickness :

— *Vi morbi sæpe coactus*

*Ante oculos aliquis nostros, ut fulminis ictu,  
Concidit, et spumas agit, ingemit, et fremit artus :  
Desipit, extentat nervos, torquetur, anhelat,  
Inconstanter in jactando membra fatigat.\**

As if by thunder struck, oft have we known  
The dire disease's victims fall and groan,  
Foam, tremble, writhe, breathe short, until at length  
In various strugglings they exhaust their strength.

or wounded in the head, when we hear them groan, and fetch deep sobs, though we gather from thence, and by certain motions of their bodies, some signs, by which it seems as if they had still some remains of knowledge; I have always believed, I say, both the body and the soul to be in a lethargic sleep :

*Vivit et est vitæ nescius ipse suæ.†*  
He lives, but knows it not.

\* Lucret. lib. iii. ver. 488, &c. † Ovid. Trist. lib. i. el. 3, ver. 12.

and could not think, that, in so great a stupefaction of the members, and so considerable a defection of the senses, the soul could maintain any force within to consider its condition ; that, therefore, persons in such a situation made no reflections that were capable of tormenting them, and consequently they were not much to be lamented. I can, for my part, think of no condition so insupportable and dreadful as to have the soul in its vigour, and afflicted, without power to declare itself, as one would say of those who are sent to the place of execution after their tongues were cut out (were it not that, in this kind of death, the most dumb seems to be the most decent, if it be accompanied with a grave and steady countenance), and of those wretched prisoners who fall into the hands of the base bloody soldiers of this age, by whom they are tormented with all kinds of cruel treatment for compelling them to some excessive ransom, which they are not able to pay, and, at the same time, are kept in such a condition and place, where they have no means of expressing and signifying their thoughts and their misery. The poets have feigned certain gods that favour the deliverance of such as thus languished to death :

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*Hunc ego diti*  
*Sacrum jussa fero, teque isto corpore solvo.\**

I, by command, offer to Pluto this,  
And from that body do thy soul dismiss.

As to the short and unconnected words and answers which are sometimes forced from them by the dint of bawling in their ears, and raving at them ; or certain motions which they make, seeming to imply some regard to what we desire of them ; this is, nevertheless, no testimony that they are perfectly alive. Thus, when a sleepy fit is coming upon us, before it has fully possessed us, we perceive, as in a dream, what is done near us, and give a perplexed and un-

\* Virg. *Æneid.* lib. iv. ver. 702.

certain bearing to the last things said, which seem but to touch upon the borders of the soul; and we make such answers to the last words spoken to us as have more of fortune in them than any meaning. Now, seeing I have actually experienced this, I make no doubt but I have hitherto formed a right judgment: for, first, being in a perfect swoon, I fumbled to open my doublet with my nails, for I was, as it were, without arms; and yet, I know, I felt nothing in my imagination that hurt me; for we have many motions in us that do not proceed from our direction:

*Semianimesque micant digiti, ferrumque retrahant.\**

And half-dead fingers grope about and feel,  
To grasp again the late-abandon'd steel.

So people, when falling, stretch out their arms by a natural impulse; and to this it is owing, that our members are prone to certain offices and agitations in which our reason has no share:

*Pacificos memorant currus abscindere membra.*

*Ut membra in terrâ videantur ab arctylus, id quod  
Decidit alseissum, cum mens tamen, atque hominis vis  
Mobilitate mali non quit sentire dolorem.†*

So chariots armed with keen scythes around,  
When fiercely driven, deal the desp'rate wound;  
And yet the wounded man, so quick's the blow,  
Is scarce disturb'd, scarce seems to feel or know  
His wound.

My stomach was so oppressed with the coagulated blood, that my hands moved to that part of their own accord, as we frequently find they often do to the part that itches, without being directed by our will. There are several animals, and even men, in whom we perceive the muscles to stir and tremble after they are dead. Every one knows, by experience, that there are certain members, which often

\* Æneid. lib. x. ver. 396.

† Lucret. lib. iii. ver. 642—644, &c.

have a titillation, erection, and declination without his leave. Now these passions, which only touch us skin deep, cannot be said to be ours; to make them so, the whole man must be engaged in it; and the pains which the foot or hand suffers while we are asleep, are none of ours. As I drew near my own house, to which the alarm of my fall had already spread, and being met by my family with the lamentations customary upon such accidents, I not only made some answer to the questions that were asked me, but they tell me, that I had so much thought as to order that a horse, which I saw trip and faulter in the road, which is hilly and rugged, should be given to my wife. One would think such a consideration must proceed from a soul that was awakened; but that was not the case with me; it was a vain airy thought, stirred up by the perception of the eyes and ears, and proceeded not from me. I knew not, for all that, from whence I came, nor whither I was going, nor was I capable of weighing or considering what was said to me. These were but slight effects which the senses produced of themselves, as by mere habit. What the soul contributed to them was in a dream lightly touched, licked, and bedewed by the faint impression of the senses. Notwithstanding this, my condition was, indeed, very easy and quiet; I had no affliction upon me, either for others or myself: it was a languishment, and an extreme weakness, without any manner of pain. I saw my family, but did not know them. When I was put to bed, I found an inexpressible sweetness in that repose, for I had been miserably pulled and tagged by those poor fellows who had taken the pains to carry me in their arms in a long and very bad way, so that they were quite tired out two or three times one after another. They offered me several remedies, but I would take none, for I verily believed I was mortally hurt in my head; and, in truth, it had been a very happy death, for the weakness of my reason deprived me of the power of discerning, as did that of my

body of the sense of feeling. I suffered myself to glide away so sweetly, and after a manner so soft and easy, that I scarce know of any other action less troublesome than that was. When I came to revive, and to recover my strength,

*Ut tandem sensus convaluere mei.\**

As my lost senses did again return.

which was in about two or three hours after, I felt myself, all at once, racked with pains, having had my limbs all bruised and battered by my fall; and was so ill for two or three nights after, that I again thought I should die, but that it would be a death more painful; and to this hour I am sensible of the bruises of that terrible shock. I will not here omit, that the last thing which I could recover was the remembrance of this accident; and they were fain to repeat to me, over and over, whither I was going, from whence I was come, and at what time of day this mischance happened to me, before I could apprehend it. As to the manner of my fall, that was concealed from me for the sake of him who had been the cause of it, and they had recourse to fiction for hiding the truth. But a long time after, and the very day that my memory began to return, and to represent to me the state in which I was at the very instant when I perceived the horse coming full drive upon me (for I saw him at my heels, and gave myself over for a dead man, though the thought was so sudden that fear had no time to intervene), it seemed to me like a flash of lightning that had pierced through my soul, and that I was returned from the other world.

Man is a  
good lesson  
to himself.

This story of an accident so insignificant to the world would be vanity in me to relate, were it not for the instruction I have gained by it for my own use; for I do really find, that, to make death familiar to us, there needs nothing more than to be on

\* Ovid. Trist. lib. i. eleg. 3, ver. 14.

the borders of it. "Every one," says Pliny, "is a very good lesson to himself, provided he be capable of looking narrowly into himself." This is not my doctrine, it is my study; nor is it the lesson of another, but my own; and yet it ought not to be ill taken if I communicate it. What is of service to me, may also, by accident, be of service to another. As to the rest, I make use of nothing but my own; and if I play the fool, it is at my own expense, and nobody else is concerned in it; for it is a kind of folly that will die with me, and is not to be entailed. We hear but of two or three ancients\* who have beaten this road; and yet we cannot say whether they did it exactly like this, as we only know their names: no man since has gone in their track; it is a ticklish subject, and more than it seems to be, to follow so rambling a path as that of the mind, to penetrate the dark profundities of its intricate windings, to choose and lay hold of the many minute quavers of its agitations; and it is a new and extraordinary amusement that takes us off from the common, yea, and the most commendable, employments of the world. It is now many years that my thoughts have had no other point of view but myself, and that I have only examined and studied myself: and if I study any thing else, it is to lay it upon, or rather store it in, my mind. And yet I do not think it a fault, if, as men do with other sciences not near so profitable, I communicate what I have learned in this point, though I am not much pleased with the progress I have made in it. There is no description so difficult, nor really so useful, as that of a man's self; and, withal, a man must adjust, adorn, and set himself off to the best advantage, to appear in public. Now I am perpetually doing this, for I am incessantly describing myself.

\* As Archilochus and Alceus among the Greeks, and Lucilius among the Romans.



Whether it  
is vanity  
for a man  
to speak  
sincerely  
of himself.

Custom has made all speaking of a man's self vicious, and positively prohibits it, in hatred to the vanity which seems to be always attached to the testimony that men give of themselves: whereas

*In vitium ducit culpæ fuga.\**

It often happens, that a cautious fear  
Of erring is a direct way to err.

I think this remedy does more hurt than good. But, though it were true, that it must necessarily be presumption for a man to make himself the subject of his discourse, I ought not, in pursuance of my general design, to forbear an action that publishes this infirmity, since it is my very case; nor ought I to conceal that fault which I not only practise but profess. Nevertheless, to speak what I really think of the matter, it is a wrong custom to condemn wine, because some people get drunk with it. A man cannot abuse any thing but what is good in itself; and I believe, that this rule regards only the popular fault. They are bitts which are no check, neither to the saints, whom we hear speak so highly of themselves, nor to the philosophers, nor to the divines. Neither am I curbed thereby, who am as little of the one as of the other. If they do not write of it expressly, they feign at least, when they have a fair opportunity, not to speak of it without reserve. Of whom does Socrates treat more largely than of himself? To what does he more frequently direct the discourses of his disciples, than to speak of themselves; not of the lesson of their book, but of the essence and agitation of their souls? We confess ourselves religiously to God and our confessor, as our neighbours (the Protestants) do to all the people. But some will say, that we speak nothing therein, but accusations against ourselves. Why then so we say all, for our very virtue itself is faulty, and de-

\* Hor. Art. Poet. ver. 31.

serving of repentance. My art and business is to live. He that forbids me to speak according to my own sense, experience, and practice, may as well enjoin an architect to speak of buildings not in his own style, but in his neighbour's; not according to his own science, but according to another man's. If it be vain-glorious for a man to publish his own good qualities, why does not Cicero prefer the eloquence of Hortensius, and Hortensius that of Cicero? Perhaps they mean, that I should give testimony of myself by works and effects, not barely by words. I chiefly paint my thoughts rough as they run, and incapable of being connected. It is as much as I can do to couch the subject in this airy body of the voice. The wisest and the devoutest men have lived with the greatest care to avoid all apparent effects. Such effects would speak more of fortune than of me. They manifest their own office, not mine, unless it be uncertainly, and by conjecture. They are scantlings of a particular figure. I expose myself entire. It is a skeleton where, at one view, the veins, muscles, and tendons appear, each in its proper place. The production of one part was owing to a cough, and that of another to paleness, or palpitation of the heart. They are not my deeds which I write, but myself, my very essence.

I am of opinion, that it is a necessary prudence in a man to make a true estimate of himself, and that he should likewise be conscientious to declare it indifferently, be it high or low. If I thought myself perfectly good and wise, I should proclaim it with a loud voice. For a man to represent himself as more unworthy than he really is, is folly, not modesty; and for him to content himself with less than his equivalent, is, according to Aristotle, pusillanimity, and cowardice. No virtue is the better for the aid of falsehood; and truth is never the subject of error. For a man to speak more of himself than is really true, is not only always presumption, but very often

It is a commendable thing for a man to set a just value upon himself.

folly. To be pleased beyond measure with what one is, and to fall indiscreetly in love with one's self, is, in my opinion, the substance of this vice. The sovereign remedy for it, is to do the very contrary to what these persons direct, who, in forbidding men to speak of themselves, do of consequence much more forbid them to think of themselves. Pride dwells in the thoughts, the tongue can have but a very little share in it.

A man's  
musing  
with him-  
self is not  
to take  
pleasure in  
himself.

They fancy, that for a man to muse is to take delight in himself; and that, if he is often conversant with his own mind, he is overindulgent to himself. But this excess arises only in those who have but a superficial idea of themselves; who inspect themselves, after their affairs are over; who call meditation dreaming and idleness; and who say, that for men to study to polish and form themselves is to build castles in the air, looking upon themselves only as a third person, and a stranger to their very selves. If any one be intoxicated with his own knowledge, whilst he looks only on his inferiors, let him but turn back his eyes to past centuries, and his pride will be abated, when he there finds how many thousand geniuses there are vastly his superiors. If he enter into a vain conceit of his valour, let him remember the lives of Scipio, Epaminondas, and so many armies and nations, that leave him so far behind them. No particular quality can puff up a man, who will put in the counterbalance his many other imperfections and infirmities, and the nothingness of the human state at best.

Why So-  
crates was  
reckoned  
the only  
wise man.

Because Socrates was the only man that heartily adopted the precept of his God, "To know himself," and by that study acquired a contempt of himself, he was reckoned the only one worthy to be called the wise man. Whosoever shall "know himself" in the same manner, let him boldly be his own trumpeter.

## CHAPTER LXIV.

*Of Honorary Rewards.*

THE writers of the Life of Augustus Cæsar observe, that in his military discipline he was wonderfully liberal of his gifts to men of merit, but that\* he was altogether as sparing of rewards merely honorary, though he had himself been gratified by his uncle with all the military rewards, before he had ever been at war. It was a pretty invention, and received in most governments of the world, to establish certain vain and cheap distinctions for the honour and recompence of virtue; such as crowns of laurel, oak, and myrtle; the particular fashion of some garment; the privilege to ride about the city in a coach, or to have a torch in the night; some particular seat in the public assemblies; the prerogative of some surnames and titles; certain distinctions in their coats of arms, and the like; the use of which has been, and is to this day, variously received, according to the humours of the several nations.

Honorary rewards ought to be dispensed with very great discretion.

We (in France) as also several of our neighbours, have certain orders of knighthood, that are instituted only for this end. And, in truth, it is a good and a profitable custom to find out a way to acknowledge the worth of rare and excellent men, and to satisfy them with rewards that are not at all chargeable, either to the people or to the prince. And that which has been always found, both by ancient experience, and what we ourselves may also have observed in former times, viz. that the men of quality are fonder of such rewards than of those that bring gain and profit, is founded on a very apparent reason. If, with a regard which ought to be purely

Orders of knighthood, a laudable institution, and of great use.

\* Suetonius, in the Life of Augustus, cap. 25. *Dona militaria*, &c.

honorary, riches, or other emolument, were mingled, such mixture, instead of augmenting esteem, would debase and diminish it.

The order of St. Michael, so much esteemed at first, how fallen into contempt.

The order of St. Michael, which has been so long in repute amongst us, had no greater advantage than that it communicated no profit; which produced this effect, that heretofore there was no office nor rank whatsoever, to which the gentry aspired with so much desire, as they did to this order; nor any class which brought with it more respect and grandeur, virtue being more eager to obtain a reward purely its own, and rather honourable than profitable. For, in truth, there is not such a dignity in the use of other rewards, because they are employed on all manner of occasions. With money a man pays the wages of a servant, the diligence of a courier, the dancer, the tumbler, the tongue-pad, and the vilest offices that are done for us: nay, vice is rewarded with it, as flattery, pimping, and treachery. It is no wonder, therefore, if virtue is not so fond of receiving or being paid in this common coin, as in that which is proper and peculiar to it, altogether noble and generous. Augustus had reason to be far more thrifty and sparing of this than the other, forasmuch as honour is a privilege which is principally esteemed for its rarity, as is the case with virtue itself:

*Cui malus est nemo, quis bonus esse potest?\**

Who can seem good to him who thinks none bad?

It is not remarked as a commendation of a man, that he takes care of the education of his children, by reason it is a common act, how just soever it be, no more than we praise a tall tree, where the whole forest consists of the same. I do not think that any citizen of Sparta boasted of his valour, it being the universal virtue of that nation; or that he valued himself a whit the more for his fidelity, and contempt

\* Martial. lib. xii. ep. 82.

of riches. Even a great reward, if it be customary, can be no reward for virtue; and I know not, withal, whether we can ever call a thing great, when it is common. Therefore, since these honorary rewards are of no other value and esteem, than in their being enjoyed only by a few, the being liberal of them is the ready way to make them none at all. Though there should be more men found worthy of this order now, than in former times, nevertheless, the honour of it should not be debased, by being made too common. And that more do deserve it now, than then, may easily be the case, for there is no virtue that expands itself so easily as military valour. There is another true virtue, perfect and philosophical, of which I do not treat (and only use the term as it is commonly taken), much greater than this; which is a fortitude and courage of the soul, equally contemning all cross accidents whatsoever, even, uniform, and constant; of which ours is but a very small ray. Usage, institution, example, and custom, are capable of doing any thing in the establishment of that whereof I am treating, and with great facility render it vulgar, as by the experience of our civil war is to us very manifest. And whoever could, at this instant, unite us into one body, set all our people upon one joint enterprise, our ancient reputation in arms would flourish again. It is very certain, that in time past the order was not barely a reward of valour, but had a farther prospect; it never was the recompence of a valiant soldier, but of some famous general. The science of obedience was reckoned worthy of such a mark of honour. Anciently there was a more universal expertness in arms required, which comprehended the most rare talents, and the greatest qualities of a military man (*Neque enim eadem militares et imperatoriæ artes sunt*: i. e. "For the arts of the common soldier and of the general are not the same"); who was, likewise, of a condition to which such a dignity was suitable. But, I say,

though more men should be worthy of it now than formerly, yet it ought not to be ever the more liberally distributed; and that it were better to fall short, in not giving it to all to whom it is due, than for ever to lose, as we have lately done, the fruit of so useful an invention. No man of spirit will vouchsafe to avail himself of what is in common to many; and such of the present time, as have least deserved this reward, pretend the more to disdain it, in order by that means to rank themselves with those, to whom so much wrong has been done by the unworthy conferring and debasing of that mark of honour which was particularly due to them.

It is difficult to bring a new order of knighthood into credit.

Now to expect, by abolishing this, to create a like custom, and to bring it into credit all on a sudden, is not an undertaking proper for a season so licentious as the present is; and the consequence will be, that the last, from its origin, will incur the same inconveniences that have just ruined the other. The rules for the dispensing of this new order ought to be extremely strict and severe, in order to give it authority; whereas, in these boisterous times, such a short tight curb will not do; besides that, before this can be brought into repute, it is necessary that the memory of the first, and of the contempt into which it is fallen, should be totally lost.

Valour, the chief of the virtues among the French.

This place might naturally enough admit of some discourse upon valour, and of the difference of this virtue from others; but Plutarch has mentioned this subject so often, that it will be to no purpose for me to repeat what he has said of it. It is worthy of consideration, that our nation places valour in the highest class of the virtues, as its name shows, which is derived from value; and that, according to our way of speaking, when we mean a man is worth a great deal of money, or a man of substance, in the style of our court and gentry, it is only saying he is a valiant man, after the manner of the Romans; for the general appellation of virtue, with them, derives its etymology from *vis*, force. The proper and

essential profession of the noblesse in France is that of arms. It is probable this was the first virtue which discovered itself amongst men, and which gave advantage to some over others; whereby the strongest and most courageous have lorded it over the weaker, and acquired a particular rank and reputation, from whence it obtained that dignity of appellation; or else that these, being very warlike nations, gave the pre-eminence to the virtues which were most familiar to them, and to which they had the best title. Just so, it is owing to our passion, and the feverish solicitude we have of the chastity of women, that a good woman, a woman of worth, and a woman of honour and virtue, signify no more, with us, than a chaste woman; as if, to oblige them to this duty, we were indifferent to all the rest, and gave them the reins to all other faults whatever, on condition they would not be guilty of incontinence.\*

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## CHAPTER LXV.

### *Of the Affection of Parents to their Children.*

*To Madam d'Estissac.*

MADAM,

IF the strangeness and novelty of my subject, which are wont to give a value to things, do not save me, I shall never come off with honour from this foolish attempt; but it is so whimsical, and has so uncommon an aspect, that this, perhaps, may make it pass. It was a melancholy humour, and by consequence a humour very much an enemy to my natural constitution, engendered by the chagrin of the solitude into which I have cast myself for some years past, that first put into my head this idle whim



of commencing an author: and afterwards, being totally destitute of any other subject, I was obliged to trust to myself both for the thesis and the argument. It is the only book of its kind in the world, on a plan so wild and extravagant; nor is there any thing worthy of remark upon this occasion, but the whimsicalness of it; for the best workman in the world could not have given a form to a subject so vain and frivolous, fit to recommend it to esteem. Now, Madam, being about to draw my own picture to the life, I should have forgot one feature of importance, had I not therein represented the veneration which I always paid to your merit: and this I chose to mention in the beginning of the present chapter, by reason that among your other excellent qualities, that of the affection which you have manifested to your children has a place in one of the highest classes. Whoever hears at what age M. d'Estissac, your husband, left you a widow; the great and honourable matches that have been offered to you, as many as to any lady in France of your rank; the constancy and steadiness with which you have, for so many years, and in opposition to so many crosses and difficulties, sustained the weight and management of their affairs, whereby you have been teased in almost every part of France, and the happy train you have put them into by your own prudence or good fortune; he will be ready to say with me, that we have not, in our times, a more lively instance of maternal affection than yours. God be praised, Madam, that it has been employed to so good purpose; for the great hopes that M. d'Estissac, the son, gives of himself, are a sufficient warrant, that, when he comes of age, you will reap from him the obedience and gratitude of a very good son. But as, by reason of his tender years, he is not in a capacity to take notice of the many extraordinary kind offices which he has received from you, I am willing that, if these papers happen to fall into his hands some day when I have no speech left to

declare it, he should receive this true testimony from me, which will be more fully proved to him by the good effects which, with God's permission, will convince him, that there is not a gentleman in France who owes more to his mother than he does; and that he cannot, for the future, give a surer testimony of his goodness and virtue, than by acknowledging you for so excellent a mother.

If there be any law truly natural, that is to say, <sup>How it happens that the affection of parents to their children is greater than that of children to their parents.</sup> any instinct that is universally and perpetually imprinted both on man and beast (which is a disputed point), I may give it as my opinion, that, next to the care which every animal has of self-preservation, and of avoiding every thing that is hurtful, the affection which the breeder or begetter bears to the offspring stands in the second place: and because nature seems to have implanted it in us, for the purpose of supporting the species, it is no wonder that the love of children does not go back to their parents in so great a degree. To which we may add this other Aristotelian notion, that he who does a benefit to any one, loves him better than he is beloved by him; and he to whom a benefit is due, loves more than he who owes it: so every artificer is fonder of his workmanship than, if that piece of work had sense, it would be of him, because we love existence, and existence consists in motion and action: for this reason every one has, in some sort, a being in his work. He who does a good office, performs an action that is brave and honest: he who receives it only practises the *utile*. Now the *utile* is not near so amiable as the *honestum*. The *honestum* is stable and permanent, supplying him who has performed it with a constant satisfaction. The *utile* loses itself, and easily slides away; nor is the memory of it either so fresh or fragrant. Those things are dearest to us that have cost most, and giving is more chargeable than receiving.

Since it has pleased God to endue us with some <sup>To what end men are created</sup> capacity of discussing things, to the end that we

capable of reasoning. may not be slavishly subject, like the brute animals, to the common laws of nature, but that we may apply ourselves to them with judgment and free-will; we ought, indeed, to yield a little to the mere authority of nature, but not to suffer ourselves to be tyrannically hurried away by her; for reason ought to be the sole conductor of our inclinations. For my own part, I have a strange disgust to those propensities that start up in us without the direction and mediation of our judgment: as for instance, while I am treating of the subject, I cannot entertain the passion of dandling infants in the month, when they have no apparent perception in the soul, nor shape of body to make them amiable; and I never willingly suffered them to be nursed in my presence.

What ought to be the love of parents to their children.

Such an affection for children as is real, and well regulated, ought to spring and increase with the knowledge they give us of themselves; and then, if they are worthy of it, natural propensity, walking in the same pace with reason, will make us cherish them with a fondness truly paternal; if they are otherwise, we ought in the same manner to exercise our judgment of them by always submitting to reason, notwithstanding the power of nature. But it often happens on the contrary; and generally speaking, we are more smitten with the caperings and silly frolics of our children, than we are afterwards with their actions when they are directed by judgment; as if we had loved them for our pastime, as monkeys, not as human beings. And there are some who furnish their children bountifully with playthings, yet grudge the least necessary expense for them when they are grown up. Nay, it seems as if our being more niggardly and close-fisted to them proceeded from our envy at seeing them make a figure, and enjoy themselves, in the world when we are on the point of leaving it. We are vexed to see them tread upon our heels as if they wanted us to be gone; and if this should be really our fear, since

such is the order of things that children cannot, to speak the truth, exist nor live but at the expense of our being and life, we should never have concerned ourselves in getting them.

For my part, I think it cruelty and injustice not to admit them into a share and partnership of our substance, nor to associate them in the secret of our domestic affairs when they are capable of such knowledge; and that it would be altogether as wicked for us not to lessen, abridge, and contract our own conveniences, on purpose to make provision for theirs, since we begat them for that end. It is unjust, that an old father, battered with age, and with one foot in the grave, should enjoy alone, in his chimney-corner, the substance that would suffice for the maintenance and advancement of several children; and that he should suffer them to lose the best of their time, for want of allowing them the means to put themselves forward in the service of the public, and the knowledge of mankind.

They are hereby driven to desperate pursuits of methods, how unjust soever, to provide for their own support: as I have known, in my time, several young men, of good extraction, so addicted to theft, that no correction could cure them of it. I knew one of an honourable family, to whom, at the request of a brother of his, a very honest and brave gentleman, I spoke once upon this subject. He confessed to me, very frankly, that he had been forced into this dirty road by the severity and avarice of his father; and that now he was so accustomed to it, that he could not leave it off: and at this time being, with several others, at a lady's levee, he was caught filching her jewels. It put me in mind of a story, which I had heard of another gentleman so habituated and accomplished in this fine profession in his youthful days, that when he came to his paternal estate, and determined to abandon the practice, he could not pass by a shop where there was any thing that he wanted, without stealing

Fathers ought to admit their children to a share of their substance.

Young men of good families forced to rob, in order to supply their necessities.

it, though he had the disgrace of sending the money afterwards to pay for it. And I myself have seen several so addicted to this crime, that they could not even forbear pilfering things from their companions, though with an intent to restore them. I am a Gascon, yet there is no vice that I am less acquainted with than this. I hate it something more by disposition than I condemn it by discourse. I have not so much as a desire for any thing that is another man's. This province of ours is, in truth, a little more in disgrace than the other parts of the French nation; and yet we have seen, in our time, several men, of good families, of other provinces, in the hands of justice, after being convicted of many shocking robberies. I wish the fathers are not, in some measure, to blame for this vice of the sons.

Bad excuse  
of the  
fathers,  
who hoard  
their mo-  
ney to gain  
the more  
re-pect  
from their  
children.

If a man should tell me, as a nobleman, of very good understanding, once did, that "He hoarded up wealth for no other use and advantage but to make himself honoured and courted by his kindred; and that, age having deprived him of all other ability, it was the sole remedy he had left to keep up his authority in his family, and to prevent his falling into the contempt and scorn of the world (though in truth, according to Aristotle, not only old age, but every infirmity is the promoter of avarice): this is saying something, but it is physic for a disease of which we ought to avoid the source."

The means  
by which a  
father  
should pro-  
cure the re-  
spect of his  
children.

Very miserable is that father, who has no other hold of his children's affection (if this deserve the name of affection) but the need in which they stand of his assistance. He must render himself worthy of respect by his virtue and wisdom, and of love by his bounty and engaging behaviour. Even the very ashes of a rich material have their value, and we are accustomed to have a respect and reverence for the bones and reliques of persons of true worth. The old age of a man who has passed his days in honour,

must always be venerable, and particularly to his children, whose minds he must have formed to their duty by reason, not by the necessity and the need they have of him, nor by roughness and force :

— *Et errat longè meâ quidem sententiâ,  
Qui imperium credat esse gravius aut stabilius  
Vî quod sit, quàm illud quod amicitîâ adjungitur.\**

And he extremely differs from my sense,  
Who thinks the pow'r obtain'd by violence  
Can ever prove more solid and secure,  
Than that which friendship's softer means procure.

I condemn all violence in the education of tender minds that are to be trained up to honour and liberty. There is I know not what servility in rigour and constraint; and I am of opinion that what cannot be done by reason, prudence, and address, is never to be effected by force. I myself was brought up after this manner; and they tell me, that, in my first stage of life, I never was whipped but twice, and that but gently. I intended to have practised the same method with my children, who all died at nurse, except Leonora, my only daughter, who is six years old, and upwards: she never has had any worse correction for her childish faults, and for the regulation of her conduct (by the easy concurrence of her mother's indulgence) than words, and those very gentle. And, though my desire should herein be frustrated, there are other causes to be blamed, without reproaching my discipline, which I know to be just and natural. I should have been more serious, in this respect, towards the males, as born to less subjection, and a state of greater liberty, and should have aimed to have enlarged their hearts with sincerity and frankness. I never observed that whipping had any other effect than to render those who suffered it more dastardly, or more hardened in wickedness.

Violence  
in the edu-  
cation of  
children  
condema-  
ed.

\* Terent. Adelph. act. i. sc. 1, ver. 39.

The true way for parents to gain the love of their children.

Do we wish to be beloved by our children? Do we desire to deprive them of all occasion to wish for our death? (though no occasion of so horrid a wish can be either just or excusable, *Nullum scelus rationem habet* :\* i. e. "No crime is founded upon "reason") let us give them all the reasonable accommodations of life that are in our power. In order to this we should not marry so young that our age may happen, in time, as it were, to be confounded with theirs; for this inconvenience plunges us into many difficulties. I address this particularly to our gentry, who have little or nothing to do, and live, as they call it, only upon their estates; for, as to others who have their livelihood to get, the number and society of their children is an advantage to their management of affairs, they being so many new tools and instruments wherewith to grow rich.

The most proper age for marriage.

I was married at thirty-three years of age, and commend Aristotle's opinion, who, it is said, approved of thirty-five. Plato, who was against marriage before thirty, had reason to ridicule those who enter into that state after thirty-five, and he condemns their issue as unworthy of aliment and life. Thales gave truer limits to it, who, being pressed by his mother to marry whilst he was young, said, "It was "not yet time;"† and being urged again to it, when he was advanced in years, replied, "It was "too late in life." We must not implicitly resign ourselves to every importunity. The ancient Gauls thought it a most reproachful thing for a man to have society with a woman before the age of twenty,‡ and especially recommended it to the men who designed themselves for war, to keep their virginity till well grown in years, forasmuch as courage is abated and diverted by copulation with woman :

\* Ex Crat. Scipionis Africani apud Tit. Liv. lib. xxviii. cap. 28.

† Diogenes Laert. in the Life of Thales, lib. i. sect. 26.

‡ What Montaigne ascribes here to the Gauls, Cæsar says expressly of the Germans, de Bello Gallico, lib. vi. *Qui diutissimè impuberes permanserunt, maximam inter suos ferunt laudem, &c.*

*Mà hor congiunto a giovinetta sposa,  
E lieto homai de figli, era invilito  
Ne gli affetti di padre, e di marito.\**

But now he has a spouse that's young and fair,  
His courage is abated, and his care  
His wife and children all between them share.

Muleasses, king of Tunis, who was restored to his dominions by the emperor Charles V. reproached the memory of his father Mahomet, for keeping so much company with the women, calling him "Loose, effeminate, and a getter of children." The Greek history observes of Iccus† the Tarentine, Chrysso, Astyllus, Diopompus, and others, that, for the sake of keeping their bodies in due strength for service at the Olympic games, wrestling, and the like exercises, they denied themselves all commerce with Venus as long as that service lasted.‡ There is a certain country in the Spanish West Indies, where the men are not allowed to marry till they are turned of forty, and yet the girls are permitted to do it at ten. It is not time for a gentleman of thirty-five years old to give place to his son who is twenty, he being himself in a capacity to serve in warlike expeditions, or at his prince's court, and having so much need of all his accoutrements, that though he ought certainly to part with a share to his son, yet it should not be so great as to leave himself unfurnished: and such a one may justly make use of the saying common in the mouths of fathers: "I have no mind to put off my clothes before I go to bed."

But a father who is bowed down with old age and infirmities, and deprived of the common society of mankind by his weakness and want of health, injures both himself, and his family, by brooding to no pur-

A father that is superannuated ought to give up his estate to his child.

\* Il Tasso *Gerusalem Liberata*, canto x. stanza 39.

† In all the editions of Montaigne that I could ever get a sight of, not excepting the translation by Mr. Cotton, it is Jecus instead of Iccus.

‡ Plato de Legibus, lib. viii. p. 647.



pose, over a great heap of treasure. He has lived long enough, if he be wise, to have a desire to strip, I do not mean, to his skin, but to his shirt, and a warm night-gown, and take to his bed-chamber, surrendering all other grandeur, of which he has no farther use, to those to whom it ought to belong by the law of nature. It is but reason that he should leave the use of it to them, seeing nature has deprived him of the enjoyment of it; otherwise there is, undoubtedly, ill-nature and envy in the case. The greatest action that ever was performed by the emperor Charles V. was when, in imitation of some of the ancients of his quality, he confessed, that reason plainly commands us to strip off our clothes when they grow too heavy and cumbersome, and to lie down when our legs fail us: for when he found himself deficient of the spirit and ability for conducting affairs, with the glory which he had therein acquired, he resigned his revenues, grandeur, and power to his son:

*Solve senescentem mature sanus equum, ne  
Peccet ad extremum ridendus, et ilia ducat.\**

The old worn courser in good time dismiss,  
Lest falling in the race spectators hiss.

This fault of a man's not knowing himself in time, and of being insensible of the feebleness and extreme alteration which age naturally brings with it, and which, in my opinion, equally affects both the soul and body (and the soul, perhaps, as much more again than the body), has sunk the reputation of most of the great men in the world. I have known, in my time, and been intimately acquainted with some personages in great power, who, it was easy to discern, were strangely lapsed from the abilities which I was sure they were once endued with by the reputation they had acquired in their best days: and, for the sake of their honour, I have wished them at

\* Horat. lib. i. ep. i. ver. 8, 9.

home at their ease, discharged of their public and military employments, which were grown too heavy for their shoulders. I was formerly very familiar in the house of a gentleman who was a widower, and very old, yet hearty, who had several daughters marriageable, and a son too of ripe years. Such a family brought upon him many visits, and a great expense, which he did not much like, not only in regard to frugality, but much less because, by reason of his age, he had taken up a course of life far different from ours. I said to him one day, a little freely, as I used to do, that it would become him better to give place to us, to let his son have his principal house (that being the only one he had that was convenient and well furnished), and to retire to an estate he had hard by, where nobody would trouble his repose, because he could not otherwise avoid our importunity, considering the condition of his children. He took my advice afterwards, and found benefit by it. I do not mean, that a man should make over what he has to his children in such a manner as to disable him from retracting. I myself, who am just at the age for acting the same part, would let them have the enjoyment of my house and substance, but with a power of revocation, if they gave me occasion for it: I would leave them the use thereof, because they would be no longer proper for me; and, as to the authority over the whole, I would reserve to myself just what share of it I thought fit, having ever been of opinion, that it must be a great satisfaction to an aged father, for himself to put his children into the way of managing his affairs, and to have power, during his life, to control their behaviour, supplying them with instruction and advice from his own fund of experience, and for himself to direct his successors in the way of preserving the ancient honour and order of his family, and by that means be sure of not being disappointed in the hopes he may conceive of their future conduct; to this end I would not avoid their company, but would have a

strict eye over them, and partake, as far as my age would permit, of their feasts and jollity. If I did not live amongst them (which I could not do without spoiling their mirth by the moroseness of my age, and the complaint of my ailments, and without putting a constraint upon the rules and forms of living I should then have established), I would at least live near to them, in some part of my house, not the best for show, but the most commodious. I would not be like a dean of St. Hilary of Poitiers, whom I saw, some years ago, abandoned to such a solitary retirement, by reason of his melancholy, that, when I entered his chamber, he had never stirred out of it in twenty-two years, and yet all his motions were free and easy, saving a rheum that had fallen upon his lungs. He would hardly suffer any body to come and see him once a week, but always kept himself shut up in his chamber alone, except that he had something brought to him once a day to eat, by a servant, who did but just come in and go out again. His employment was walking up and down the room, and reading a book (for he had a smattering of learning), being obstinately bent to die in this retirement, as he did soon after. I would endeavour, by engaging conversation, to breed a lively and unfeigned friendship and good-will in my children towards me, which, in well-disposed minds, is not hard to do; for, if they are mad brutes, of which this age produces thousands, we must then abhor and shun them.

Children ought not to be forbidden to call them by the name of father.

I hate the custom of forbidding children to call their father by the name of father, and enjoining them to use another, as more reverential; as if nature had not sufficiently provided for the establishment of our authority. We invoke the Almighty God by the style of Father, and yet scorn that our children should call us so. This is an error which I have reformed in my family.\*

\* The good king Henry IV. reformed it also in his family; for Perefex says, he would not have his children call him Monsieur, or

It is also folly and injustice to deprive children, when grown up, of familiarity with their fathers, and to think to keep them in awe and obedience by their fathers' assuming an austere and supercilious countenance towards them. For it is a mere farce this, which, so far from answering the end, renders the fathers disagreeable to their children, and, what is worse, ridiculous. They have youth and vigour of their side, consequently the countenance and favour of the world, and only laugh, with contempt, at the haughty, tyrannical, and scarecrow looks of a man without blood either in his heart or his veins: though I could make myself feared, yet I had much rather be loved.

There are so many various defects in old age, so much disability, and it is so liable to contempt, that the best purchase such a man can make is the love and kindness of his family, command and terror being no longer his weapons. I have known a certain man, who, having been very insolent in his youth, when he came to be old, though he was in as good health as could be, yet would lay about him, bite with his teeth, swear, storm, and bluster more than any bully in France, a prey to his own jealousy and vigilance; and all owing to the combination of his family, who have the command of the best share of his barn, cellar, and money-chest, though he will sooner part with his eyes than the keys in his purse: while he hugs himself with the frugality and niggardliness of his table, in all the detached parts of his house there is nothing but rioting, play, and profusion of expense, and cracking of jokes at his fruitless choler and caution. Every one is a centinel against him, and if, by accident, any wretch that serves him takes his part, they instantly make him liable to his suspicion, this being a bait that old age

Children that are grown up ought to be admitted to a familiarity with their fathers.

Instance of an old man who, aiming to be formidable, became contemptible.

Sir, an appellation which seems to make the father and the children strangers, and which is a mark of subjection and slavery; but that they should call him Papa or Father, an appellation of love and tenderness. *History of Henry the Great, p. 503.*

is apt enough, of itself, to snap at. How oft has this gentleman boasted to me in what great awe he kept his family, and how exact an obedience and reverence they paid him! How clearly did this man see into his own affairs!

*Ille solus nescit omnia.\**

Yet he alone is ignorant of all.

I do not know any man that can muster more parts, both natural and acquired, proper to maintain such a dominion, than he, yet he has no more command of them than a child: therefore I have singled him out, as the most exemplary instance of all that I know of such a temper. It were a subject sufficient for a question in the schools, "Whether he is better thus "than otherwise?" In his presence all submit to him, and give so much way to his vanity, that nobody ever resists him: he is as much believed, feared, and respected, as his heart can desire: does he give a dismissal to a servant? he packs up his bundle, and is gone, but it is no farther than out of his presence: the pace of old age is so slow, and the senses then so confused, that the discarded person will live and officiate, as before, in the same house, a year together, without being perceived; and, when it is a proper season, letters are pretended to come from a great way off, very pitiful, suppliant, and full of promises of amendment, by virtue of which he is again received into favour. Does Monsieur make any bargain, or send away any dispatch that does not please? it is suppressed, and reasons enough invented afterwards, to excuse the failure of the execution, or of the answer. As no strange letters are brought to him in the first place, he never sees any but those that are thought fit to be communicated: if, by accident, they come first to his hand, as he is used to trust a certain person to read them to him, he reads, *extempore*, what he pleases, and every now

\* Terence *Adelph.* act. iv. sc. 2, ver. 9.

and then makes such a one ask his pardon in the same letter wherein he abuses him. In fine, he sees nothing but by some fiction prepared and preconcerted, and the most satisfactory that can be invented, for fear of rousing his chagrin and choler. I have seen enough of long and constant scenes of economy of different forms, but all to the same effect.

Women are always apt to cross their husbands' inclinations.\* They lay hold, with both hands, on all occasions to quarrel with them, and the first excuse serves for a plenary justification. I knew one who made no conscience to rob her husband by wholesale, that, as she told her confessor, she might have the more to give in charity. No management seems to them of sufficient dignity, if proceeding from the husband's concession. They must usurp it, either by craft or insolence, and always injuriously, in order to give it a grace and authority; as in the case I am speaking of, when it is against a poor old man, and in favour of the children, then they make a handle of this plea, and render it subservient to their passion with glory; and, as in a common servitude, easily cabal against his dominion and government. If they be males grown up and flourishing, they also suddenly suborn, either by force or favour, the steward, the rent-gatherer, and all the rest.

Those men, who have neither wife nor child, fall not so easily into this misfortune, but, when they do, they suffer more cruelly and undeservingly. Old Cato said, in his time, "So many servants, so many enemies." Consider then, whether, according to the difference between the purity of the age he lived in, and the corruption of the present, he did not mean to advertise us, that wife, son, and servant are so many enemies to us. It is of good

\* What I here say is not to approve, but only to explain Montaigne's opinion; for, perhaps, I have seen as many husbands violently thwarting their wives, as wives that are fond of crossing their husbands:

service to decrepid old age, that it furnishes us with insensibility and ignorance, and a facility of being deceived. For, did we see and repine at it, what would become of us, especially in such an age as this, when the judges, who are to decide our controversies, are generally partial to the youth, and interested in the causes? In case that I should not discover this fraud, I cannot, at least, fail to discern that I am liable to be cheated; and can a man ever extol a friend too much in comparison with these civil ties? The very image of it, which I see so pure in beasts, how do I adore it! If others cheat me, at least I do not deceive myself in thinking I am able to guard against them, or in cudgelling my brains how to avoid their snares. I protect myself from such treachery in my own bosom, not by a restless and turbulent curiosity, but rather by mirth and resolution. When I hear talk of any one's condition, I do not give myself a thought about him, but I presently look into myself to see how it is with me: whatever touches another, concerns me: the accident that has befallen him is a warning to me, and rouses my attention on that side: every day and every hour we say things of another, which we might more properly say of ourselves, could we but call our observations home, as well as extend them abroad: and several authors have, in this manner, prejudiced their own cause, by running precipitately against that which they attack, and darting those very shafts against their enemies, that might, with greater advantage, be cast back upon themselves.

Fathers  
ought to  
exercise a  
familiarity  
with their  
children  
when they  
are capable  
of it.

The late marshal de Monluc having lost his son, who died in the island of Madeira, and was, in truth, a brave hopeful young gentleman, discovered to me, amongst his other causes of regretting him, what a sorrow it was to him, that he had never been familiar with him; and that, by the humour of paternal gravity and grimace, he had lost the advantage of sounding and thoroughly knowing his son, and also of declaring to him the extraordinary love he had for him,

and the worthy opinion he had of his virtue. "Whereas," said he, "the poor youth never saw me with any other countenance towards him but what was stern and disdainful, and has left this world with a belief that I neither knew how to love nor esteem him according to his merit. For whom did I reserve the discovery of that singular affection with which I loved him from my soul? Ought not he himself to have had all the pleasure of it, and all the obligation? I constrained and even tortured myself to wear the silly mask, and by that means lost the pleasure of his conversation, and his inclination into the bargain, which could not but be very cold towards me, as I had always treated him roughly, and more like a tyrant than a tender father." I think this complaint of his was well founded and rational: for, as I know by too certain experience, there is no consolation so sweet, in the loss of our friends, as the consciousness of having acted to them without reserve, and of having had a perfect and entire communication with them. O my friend,\* am I the better for having been sensible of this, or am I the worse? I am verily much the better for it. This lamentation for the loss is both a comfort and an honour to me: is it not a pious and pleasing office of my life to be always celebrating my friends' obsequies? Can there be any possession so valuable as this privation? I open my mind to my family as much as I can, and very willingly let them know how they and every one else stand in my opinion and inclination. I am eager to bring out and expose myself to them, being unwilling they should be mistaken in me in any thing. Amongst other particular customs of our ancient Gauls, one was, as Cæsar says, that the sons never came into the presence of their fathers, nor durst be

\* This apostrophe is addressed, by our author, to his friend La Boetius, as it plainly appears by the discourse upon his death, written and published by Montaigne himself, and which you will find at the end of this edition of the Essays.



seen abroad in their company till they began to bear arms; thereby importing, that then also was the time when the fathers admitted them to their familiarity and acquaintance.\*

The hard-heartedness of fathers who deprive their children of the produce of their estates, even after their death.

I have also known another kind of indiscretion in some fathers of my time, who, not content with depriving their children, during their own long lives, of the share they ought naturally to have in their fortunes, when they come to die, transfer to their wives the same power over all their goods and chattels, and liberty to dispose thereof as they please. And I knew a certain nobleman, one of the chief officers of our crown, that, by right of succession, had an expectancy of about fifty thousand crowns revenue, who died necessitous, and much in debt, at above fifty years of age, at the same time that his mother, who was a decrepid old woman, still continued in possession of his whole estate, by order of his father, who had lived to near fourscore. I do not think this at all reasonable.

A great jointure the ruin of families.

I am therefore of opinion, that it is of very little advantage to a man who is in good circumstances to court a woman who shall charge his estate with a great jointure, there being no foreign debt that is more ruinous to families. My ancestors, in general, found their account by this caution, and so have I. But they who dissuade us from marrying rich women, lest they should not prove so tractable and respectful, are wrong in advising a man to miss a real advantage for such a contingency. Unreasonable women have no regard to one consideration more than another: they are fondest of their own opinions when they are most in the wrong. Injustice is as tempting to them as the honour of virtuous actions is to good women: and the richer they be, the more complaisant they are, as the greatest beauties take the most pleasure and pride in being chaste.

Widows must be left

It is but reason to leave the administration of es-

\* De Bello Gallico, lib. vi.

tates to the mothers, till the children are of age by law to manage them; but the father has brought them up very ill indeed, if he has not reason to hope, that, when they come to years of maturity, they will have more wisdom and capacity than his wife, considering the weakness of the sex: yet, in truth, it would be much more unnatural to make the mothers dependant on the discretion of their children: they ought to have a plentiful provision wherewith to maintain themselves according to the condition of their families, and their time of life, forasmuch as poverty is much more unsuitable and intolerable to them than to the males; and the burden ought therefore to be laid rather upon the children than the mother.

In general, the most judicious distribution of our estates, when we come to die, is, in my opinion, to leave them to be disposed of according to the custom of the country. The laws have more nicely considered this point than we have, and it were better to let them be deficient in their choice, than that we should rashly run the hazard of miscarrying in ours. The estates are not properly our own, since, by a civil prescription, and exclusive of our concurrence, they are decreed to certain successors: and, although we have some liberty beyond that, yet I think we ought not, without great and manifest cause, to take away that from any one which he has acquired by fortune, and to which common justice gave him a title; it being an unreasonable abuse of this liberty to make it subservient to our own frivolous and private fancies. It has been my good fortune, that no opportunities have fallen in my way to tempt me, and to divert my affection from the common and legal institution. I know some persons whose friendship it is impossible to secure by a long series of good offices. One word ill taken obliterates the merit of ten years. Happy is the man who is prepared to soothe their good-will at this last passage. The action that was last performed carries it, the operation depend-

in a capacity to support their condition.

The most prudent distribution of estates before death.

ing not upon the best and the most frequent offices, but upon those that are most recent : these are people that play with their last wills and testaments, as with apples and rods, to gratify or chastise every action of those who pretend to an interest in their regard. It is a matter of too great length and consequence to be thus brought upon the carpet at every turn, and what wise men are fixed in once for all, having a regard, above all things, to reason and the public observance. We are, in short, too fond of these masculine substitutions, and ridiculously think to make our names thereby last to eternity. We also lay too great stress on the vain conjectures of what shall happen hereafter, from the remarks we make on the understandings of children. Perhaps I might have had injustice done me in being turned out of my rank for having been the dullest blockhead, and the longest and most unwilling in getting my lesson, not only of all my brothers, but of all the boys in my native province, whether it was a lesson for the exercise of the understanding, or of the body. It is a folly to make extraordinary elections by placing any credit in these divinations, wherein we are so often deceived. If this rule of primogeniture was to be violated, and the destinies to be corrected in the choice they have made of our heirs, it might be done more plausibly upon the observation of some remarkable and enormous deformity of the body, a fault that is constant, and never to be amended, and what we (the French) who are great admirers of beauty, think a prejudice of no small importance.

Plato's opinion, that the disposition of estates should be regulated by the laws.

The pleasant dialogue, between Plato the legislator and his fellow citizens, will do honour to this passage.\* "What," said they, when they found their end approaching, "may we not dispose of our own to whom we please? Good God, how cruel is this! That it shall not be lawful for us to give what we please, more or less, to those about us,

\* De Legibus, lib. xi. p. 969, 970. Edit. Wechel. Fich.

feeling and pain, as the reputation and the inventions of our understanding, and if we did not inflict corporal punishment on the discipline and monuments of the muses. Now Labienus\* could not bear this loss, nor survive the offspring of his brain that was so dear to him, but caused himself to be conveyed to and shut up alive in the funeral monument of his ancestors, where he made provision to kill and bury himself all at once: it is not easy to produce an instance of more vehement paternal affection than this. Cassius Severus, a man of great eloquence, and his familiar friend, seeing Labienus's books committed to the flames, cried out, that, by the same sentence, they might as well condemn him to be burned also, because he carried and retained all the contents thereof in his memory.†

The like accident happened to Cremutius Cordus, who was accused of having, in his books, com-  
And the books of Cremutius Cordus.  
 mended Brutus and Cassius. That base, servile, and corrupt senate, worthy of a worse master than Tiberius, condemned his writings to the flames. He was glad to die with them, and killed himself by fasting.‡

Honest Lucan being condemned to die by that miscreant Nero, when he was in the agonies of  
Lucan's fondness for his poetry.  
 death, most of that blood being already run out of the veins of his arms which he had caused his surgeon to open, and a chillness having seized the extremities of his body, which began to approach to the vital parts, the last thing he had in his memory was some verses out of his book of the battle of Pharsalia, which he repeated, and they were the last words he spoke.§ What was this but a tender and paternal leave which he took of his offspring, representing the farewells and close embraces which we give to our children when we are dying, and an

\* M. Annæus Senec. Controv. lib. v. from the beginning,

† Idem, ibid.

‡ Tacit. Annal. lib. iv.

§ Tacit. Annal. lib. xv. at the conclusion.

effect of that natural inclination which calls to our remembrance, in this extremity, those things which we held most dear in our life-time?

Whether Epicurus would not have preferred his writings to the children descended from his loins.

Can we suppose, that Epicurus, who, when racked almost to death, as he says, with extreme pains of the cholic, comforted himself, however, that he had left such fine doctrine to mankind, would have entertained so much satisfaction in a number of children never so well born and bred, had he had any, as he did in the production of his inestimable writings? And that if it had been put to his choice to have left an ill-favoured untoward child behind him, or a silly ridiculous book, he would not have rather chose, as any other man of his abilities would have done, to have incurred the first misfortune rather than the last. It would, perhaps, have been impiety in St. Augustine, for example, after it had been proposed to him, on the one hand, to bury his writings, from which our religion has received so great benefit, or to bury his children, in case he had any, if he had not rather chose to have buried his children.

Of the affection which Montaigne had for his book.

For my own part, I know not whether I should not much rather have begot one perfectly formed by my converse with the muses, than by that with my wife. To this, such as it is, what I give, I give absolutely and irrevocably, as men do to the fruit of their bodies. That little good which I have done for it, is no more at my own disposal. It may know many things that I no longer know, and hold of me that which I have not retained; and if I stood in need, I must borrow from thence, as much as a stranger. If I am wiser than my book, it is richer than me. There are few men addicted to poetry, who would not have been better pleased to be the fathers of the *Æneid*, than of the finest youth in Rome; and who would not have borne the loss of the latter more calmly than that of the former: for, according to Aristotle, the poet espec-

ally, of all workmen, is the fondest of his own performances.

It is scarce to be believed, that Epaminondas, who The fondness of Epaminondas for his two famous victories. boasted, that he had left to posterity two daughters, that would, one day, do honour to their father, viz. the two noble victories which he had gained over the Lacedæmonians, would have given his free consent to exchange them for the most shining beauties of all Greece; nor that Alexander and Cæsar ever wished to be deprived of the grandeur of their glorious exploits in war, for the advantage of having children and heirs, how perfect and accomplished soever. Nay, I make a great question, whether And of Phidias for his finest statues. Phidias, or any other eminent statuary, would have been so solicitous for the preservation and continuance of his natural children, as of an excellent statue, which he had finished, according to art, with long labour and study. And as to those vicious and furious passions of love, that have sometimes flamed in the breasts of fathers to their daughters, or of mothers to their sons, the like is also found in this other sort of parentage; witness the story of Pygmalion, who having made the statue of a woman of singular beauty, fell so passionately in love with this workmanship of his, that the gods, for the sake of indulging his passion, were fain to put life into it:

*Tenitatum mollescit ebur, positoque rigore  
Subsidit digitis.\**

Hard though it was, beginning to relent,  
The iv'ry breast beneath his fingers bent.

\* Ovid. Metam. lib. x. fab. 8, ver. 41, 42.

## CHAPTER LXVI.

*Of the Armour of the Parthians.*

The ill custom of not being armed till the enemy is at the gates.

IT is a vicious and a very effeminate custom of the gentry of our time, not to take arms but in a case of extreme necessity, and to lay them down again upon ever so little appearance that the danger is over. From hence arise many disorders; for, every one crying out and running to his arms just when he should take the field, some have their armour still to buckle on when their companions are already routed. Our ancestors were wont to give their head-piece, lance, and gantlet to be carried, and did not quit the rest of their equipage as long as there was any work to be done. Our troops are, at this time, all in disorder, and make but a bad appearance, by the confusion of the baggage and servants, who cannot be far from their masters, because they carry their arms. Titus Livius, speaking of our countrymen, says,\* *Intolerantissima laboris corpora viæ arma humeris gerebant*:† i. e. “Being most impatient of labour, they had much ado to carry their arms on their shoulders.” Several nations at this day retain the ancient custom of going to war without any manner of covering, or such, at least, as affords little or no defence:

*Tegmina quis capitum taptus de subere cortex.‡*

For helmets they their temples only bind

With a light scull-cap made of cork-tree rind.

Alexander, the most adventurous commander that ever was, very seldom wore armour: and such, among us, as slight it, fare never the worse for it.

\* Tit. Liv. lib. x. cap. 28.

† Though Livy says nothing of the pains which the Gauls took to carry the armour, yet this follows very naturally. Perhaps he has said it elsewhere expressly, and that here Montaigne has joined the two passages in one, as he very often does.

‡ Æneid. lib. vii. ver. 742.

Where one man is killed for want of armour, another falls by the embarrassment and weight of it, or by being crushed to pieces by some violent concussion, or rude encounter with another: for in truth, to consider the weight and thickness of what we wear, it seems as if self-defence was our only aim, and that it is rather a load upon us than a protection: we have enough to do to support the weight of it, being so fettered and manacled as if we had nothing to contend with but our armour, and as if we had not the same obligation to defend that, as that has to shield us. Tacitus\* gives a ludicrous description of the soldiers among the ancient Gauls, who were thus armed for their own defence only, without the possibility of hurting or being hurt, nor of rising again when they were once thrown down.

The armour of the French too cumbersome by its weight, to be proper for defence.

Lucullus, perceiving certain soldiers of the Medes, that formed the front of Tigranes' army, who were shut up in weighty armour, as if in cages of iron, imagined, from thence, that he should easily defeat them, and accordingly on them he began his attack. Now that our musketeers are come into credit, I fancy something will be invented to immure us, for our safety, from them, and to draw us to the war shut up in little castles, like those which the ancients put upon the backs of elephants.† This humour

The heavy and uneasy armour of the Medes.

\* Tacit. Annal. lib. iii.

† Montaigne was wrong in his conjecture, for now the soldiers apparel themselves for an attack, almost in the same manner as if they were going to a ball. The fashion, which regulates every thing in France, has introduced this custom there; the fantasticalness of which did not escape the criticism of the judicious censor of this age, the celebrated la Bruyere: "How came men," says he, "to think, heretofore, that the end of going to war was either to attack or defend? And who advised them to the use of arms both offensive and defensive? What is it obliges them now to lay these aside, and, whilst they put on boots to go to a ball, to support, without armour, and in a doublet, the pioneers who are exposed to all the fire from a counterscarp? Were our fathers, who did not think such conduct of service to the prince and the country, wise or foolish? And what heroes do we ourselves celebrate in our history? A Guesclin, a Clisson, a Foix, a Boucicaut, who all wore armour, and buckled on the cuirass?"



is far different from that of young Scipio,\* who severely chid his soldiers for placing chevaux de frize under water, in that part of the ditch where it was expected that the garrison of a town, which he had besieged, would sally out upon him, saying, "That they who besieged a town should think of attacking it, rather than of securing themselves;" and he suspected, with just reason, that this stratagem would make his soldiers not so vigilant against a surprise. He also said to a young fellow, who showed him a target that he was very proud of, "It is really a fine target, my boy, but a Roman soldier ought to trust more to his right hand than to his left." Now, it is only the not being used to wear it, that makes us think the weight of our armour insupportable :

*L'husbergò in dossò haveamo: et l'elmo in testa,  
Duc di quelli guerrier dei quali io canto,  
Ne notte ò di, doppo ch' entrarò in questa  
Stanza, gl' haveano mai mesi da canto,  
Che facile a portar come la vesta.  
Era lor, percha in uso l'havean tanto.†*

Two of these heroes,† whom I sing, had on  
Each his bright helm, and strong habergeon;  
And night nor day, nor one poor minute's space,  
Once laid them by whilst they were in this place;  
So long accustomed this weight to bear,  
Their clothes to them not lighter did appear.

The armour  
of the Ro-  
man in-  
fantry.

The emperor Caracalla used to march, on foot, through the country, at the head of his forces, and armed cap-a-pee. The Roman infantry not only carried the helmet, sword, and shield (for as to armour, says Cicero, they were so accustomed to have it on, that it was no more troublesome to them than their limbs, *Arma enim, membra militis esse*

\* Valer. Max. lib. iii. in Romanis, sect. 2. If Montaigne took this from that author, he mistook him grossly: for this author does not say that they put chevaux de frize under the water, &c. but only that some advised Scipio to do it.

† Ariosto, cant. xii. stanz. 30.

‡ Orlando and Sacrapante.

*dicunt*),\* but also a fortnight's provision, and a certain number of poles to make their ramparts, so that each man carried sixty pounds weight to his own share. And Marius's soldiers, loaden in like manner, were forced to travel five leagues in five hours, and upon an urgent occasion six. Their military discipline was much more severe than ours, and accordingly produced quite different effects. When young Scipio disbanded his soldiers in Spain, he ordered them to eat always standing, and nothing that was dressed.† The reproach that was given to a Lacedæmonian soldier, that, when he was on a military expedition, he was seen under the roof of a house, is very pertinent to the purpose; for they were so inured to hardship, that it was a shame for them to be seen under any roof but that of heaven, be the weather what it would. We would not be able to carry our men far upon these terms.

Marcellinus,‡ a man bred up in the Roman wars, The Parthians in the field were all covered with iron. makes a curious remark on the manner of the Parthians, and takes notice of it the rather for being so different from that of the Romans. "Their armour," says he, "was so artfully connected, that the plates of iron fell over one another like so many small feathers, which did not at all retard the motion of their bodies, and yet they were so strong that our darts, after striking their armour, rebounded upon us. These were the coats of mail which our ancestors used to wear." And, in another place, "They had strong hardy horses," says he, "covered with thick leather, and themselves were armed, cap-a-pee, with great scaly plates of iron, so artificially ranged, that, at the joints of all the limbs, they yielded to their motion. One would have

\* Cic. Tusc. Quæst. lib. ii. cap. 16.

† Plutarch in his Notable Sayings of the ancient Kings, Princes, and Generals, in the article of Scipio the Younger.

‡ Ammianus Marcellinus, a Latin historian, though by birth a Greek, who bore arms under the emperors Constance, Julian, &c. lib. xxiv. cap. 7.

“ said, that they were men of iron, having the armour so neatly fitted on the head, and so naturally representing the form and parts of the face, that there was no touching them but by little round holes made for their eyes to receive the light, and by chinks about their nostrils, through which, with great difficulty, they drew their breath :”

*Flexilis inductis animatur lamina membris,  
Horribilis visu, credas simulacra moveri  
Ferreæ, cognatoque viros spirare metallo;  
Par vestitus equus, ferrata fronte minantur,  
Ferratosque movent securi vulneris armos.\**

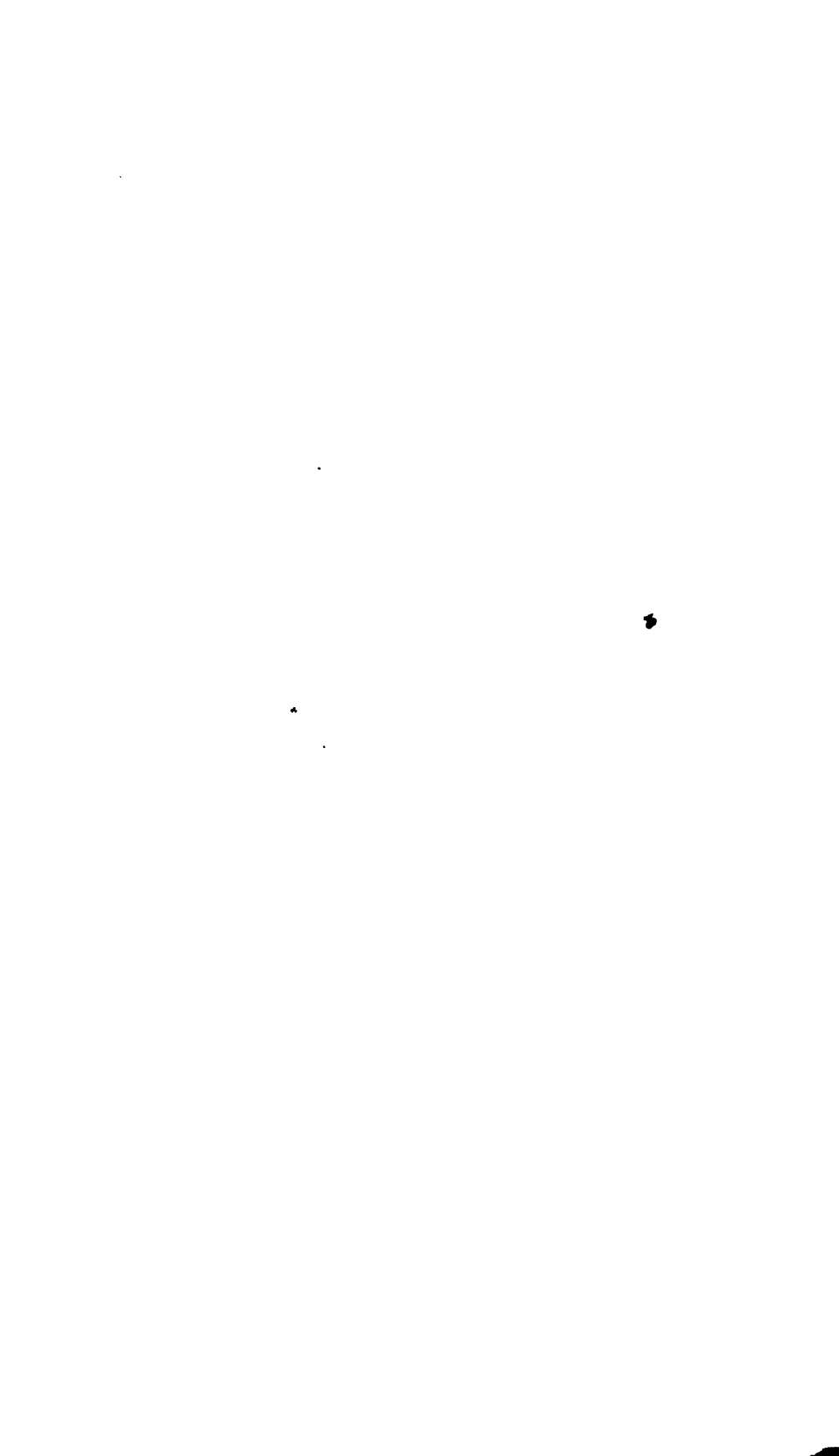
Stiff plates of steel, o'er all the body laid,  
By arm'ers' skill so flexible were made,  
That, dreadful to be seen, you would them guess  
Not to be men, but moving images;  
The horse, like arm'd, spikes bore in fronts above,  
And fearless they their iron shoulders move.

This description nearly answers to that of a Frenchman in armour, with all his horse-accoutrements. Plutarch says, that Demetrius caused two complete suits of armour to be made, for himself and for Alcinus,† the chief officer about him, of six score pounds weight, whereas the common suits weighed but half as much.

\* Claudian in Ruff. lib. ii. ver. 358, &c.

† In all Montaigne's editions, and in Mr. Cotton's translation it is spelled Alcinus, whereas the true reading is Alcippus. See Plutarch's Life of Demetrius, chap. 6.

THE END OF VOLUME I.









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